

Can't Buy Me Love: A Reply to Brennan and Jaworski
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Abstract: Critics of commodification often claim that the buying and selling of some good communicates disrespect or some other inappropriate attitude. Such *semiotic* critiques have been leveled against markets in sex, pornography, kidneys, surrogacy, blood, and many other things. Brennan and Jaworski (2015a) have recently argued that all such objections fail. They claim that the meaning of a market transaction is a highly contingent, socially constructed fact. If allowing a market for one of these goods can improve the supply, access or quality of the good, then instead of banning the market on semiotic grounds, they urge that we should revise our semiotics. In this reply, I isolate a part of the meaning of a market transaction that is not socially constructed: our market exchanges always express preferences. I then show how cogent semiotic critiques of some markets can be constructed on the basis of this fact.

I. SEMIOTIC CRITIQUES AND HOW TO REJECT THEM

During the congressional debate leading up to the National Organ Transplant Act of 1984, the legislation that banned the sale of human organs in the U.S., Dr. Bernard Towers, the co-director of UCLA's Program in Medicine, Law, and Human Values, made the following remark:

There is something inherently offensive to the human conscience, I think, about treating a fellow human being as a thing. We must treat fellow human beings as persons and not as things, and the buying and selling of parts of human beings makes them into things, and I think that is morally repulsive. (National Organ Transplant Act 1983: 299)

Dr. Towers assumes that when we buy or sell some good, we treat that good as a mere thing. Since we don't want to treat human beings (or parts of human beings) as mere things, we should not allow the sale of human organs.

The idea that the buying and selling of certain goods necessarily expresses attitudes which might be incompatible with the inherent dignity of the thing bought and sold, if true, has wide-ranging consequences. Arguments similar to the one made by Dr. Towers could be leveled against markets in sex, praise, votes, animals, religious artifacts, or great works of art. In buying and selling such things, we may be expressing attitudes incompatible with the dignity or significance of these things.

Brennan and Jaworski (2015a) call the kind of worry expressed by Dr. Towers a *semiotic objection* to a market. They formulate these objections as follows:

Semiotic Objection: Independently of noncommunicative objections, to engage in a market in some good or service X is a form of symbolic expression that communicates the wrong motive, or the wrong attitude toward X, or expresses an attitude that is incompatible with the intrinsic dignity of X, or would show disrespect or irreverence for some practice, custom, belief, or relationship with which X is associated.

(Brennan and Jaworski 2015a: 1055)

Brennan and Jaworski argue that all semiotic objections fail. They claim that the meaning of a market transaction is a “highly contingent, fluid, socially constructed fact.” What a market exchange means, what attitudes it expresses, depends on a culture’s interpretive practices. As such, the meaning that a culture imputes to markets is both malleable and subject to moral evaluation. So, if a market in some good e.g. kidneys could increase the supply, access, or quality of that good without violating rights or harming those involved, Brennan and Jaworski would say that we should allow the market and work to revise our semiotics.¹ If they are right, then a powerful objection to certain kinds of markets is neutralized. So we should ask: is the meaning of a market transaction a highly contingent, socially constructed fact?

The main argument Brennan and Jaworski use for the contingency of the meaning of market transactions is an *argument from diversity*. Their strategy is to showcase the great

diversity of attitudes people hold toward the things they buy and sell. For instance, we allow the buying and selling of animals and yet many people clearly love and respect their pets. Collectors buy and sell great works of art while respecting the significance of the artwork. In some cultures money is regularly exchanged for sex, though there is no evidence that the people in these cultures treat sex as a *mere commodity* (Jaworski and Brennan 2015a: 1064). People can have all kinds of attitudes toward the things they buy and sell. So we shouldn't think that any one specific attitude is necessarily expressed by a market transaction.

In one sense, Brennan and Jaworski's point is highly persuasive. The human mind is flexible enough to hold any attitude toward just about anything. There is no reason that we *must* think of the things we buy and sell in purely instrumental terms or that we *must* express certain inappropriate attitudes toward the things we buy and sell.

But in another sense, they miss something important. When you buy some good, you express your preference for that good. That our transaction communicates a preference is not a contingent social fact, but a necessary part of the meaning of a market transaction. And there is a cogent semiotic objection that can be built on this mundane fact.

II. NON-MARKET GOODS AND NON-CONTINGENT ATTITUDES

To see what I have in mind, consider an argument made by Michael Sandel. Though Sandel (2000) mentions semiotic objections, he is mostly concerned with the fact that market forces can *corrupt* certain goods.² When things like intimacy, recommendations, or votes are

subjected to market forces, Sandel claims, they are degraded or destroyed. The market necessarily changes the good in question. In extreme cases, some goods simply *can't* be bought or sold. Putting them up for sale would change them in some fundamental way.

In a number of places, Jaworski and Brennan claim that if it is permissible to give something away, then it is permissible to sell it.³ The point Sandel makes is that some goods which *can* be given away *can't* be sold. Add Sandel's point to the claim that market transactions express preferences and you have a semiotic objection which does not depend on contingent social facts about the meanings of markets. When we engage in certain kinds of markets, we are expressing our preference for the market good over a related good that we could otherwise get but that can't be bought and sold. The expression of this preference is not just a contingent feature of the market transaction, but necessarily connected to the practice of buying and selling. Here are some examples.

(Intimacy) Imagine that prostitution was completely legal, accepted by society, non-exploitive and not harmful to those involved. In such a world, would you purchase sex? Many of the people I've put this question to say "No." When asked to explain, they say that they aren't interested in that *kind* of sex. Sex with a partner who *wants* to have sex with you and is willing to give gratification *as a gift* is what they really desire. But what is for sale is sex with a partner who was *paid* to have sex with you and who is giving you gratification as part of an exchange. If gifted-sex is really different from bought-sex, and

if both are available, then we communicate our preference for the one over the other when we use our limited time and resources to seek out bought-sex.⁴

(Acknowledgements) Jaworski and Brennan recently published a book. To show us their comfort with markets they decided to *sell* acknowledgements.⁵ When I first heard this, I thought, “That’s not the *kind* of acknowledgement I would really want.” What I want is an acknowledgement that is freely given as result of my helpful input. That good can’t be sold, it can only be given away. A gifted-acknowledgement is not the same thing as a purchased-acknowledgement. If we use our limited time and resources to *buy* an acknowledgement instead of doing the kinds of things that might make us candidates to receive the gifted-acknowledgement, we are saying something about how we value these two goods.

(Votes) Think about the difference between a politician who was elected by buying up a majority of the electorate’s votes and one who was elected because the majority of the electorate gifted their vote to that politician. Both the bought-votes and the gifted-votes might get you elected but, intuitively, the goods differ in important ways. We might say to the politician, after she had used vote buying to win a few elections, “Why do you keep buying up elections? Don’t you care about the actual approval of the electorate?”

More work needs to be done to turn these observations into cogent semiotic arguments.

For now, these examples are meant to highlight the distinction between market transactions and

gifts. Market exchanges involve a giving-of-this-for-a-getting-of-that. Gifts involve simply a giving-of-this. Even when we engage in reciprocal gifting, we don't give on the condition of getting.

Votes, intimacy, and acknowledgements have something in common that make the gifted versions of these goods different from their paid-for cousins: they all involve attitudes that are individuated by being responses to certain kinds of reasons. Examples of such attitudes are love, admiration, respect, and gratitude. What makes some attitude an instance of admiration isn't just a kind of feeling you have, it's the fact that you have that feeling as the result of features you take to be admirable. You can't admire someone for having features you take to be lowly or deplorable. You also can't admire them just because they gave you some cash.⁶ The giving-of-this-for-the-getting-of-that nature of market exchanges means that true admiration can't be bought; it must be a gift in response to qualities taken as admirable. That's why a gifted-acknowledgement is different from a bought-acknowledgement and why the first may involve true admiration while the second cannot.⁷

I'd like to emphasize again that I have said nothing thus far about the permissibility of buying things like votes, intimacy, or acknowledgements. I'm only repeating Sandel's point that some goods, by their very nature, *can* be given away but *can't* be bought and sold. It is unfortunate that Sandel puts this point by saying that market transactions *corrupt* certain goods. First, this obscures the fact that the gifted goods and the purchased goods are (at least in some cases) not the same good. Second, it presumes an answer to the question about the relative value

of the gifted good and the purchased good. It might very well be that, even if a gifted-vote is different from a bought-vote, there is nothing objectionable about preferring the bought version over the gifted one. Likewise, gifted-sex might not really be any better than its purchased cousin. The point is just that sometimes a market good is not the same thing as a closely related gifted good and that when we pursue the market good to the exclusion of its gifted cousin, we express a preference for the one over the other. If, on reflection, we think this preference is not in line with the relative value of the two goods, then we will have the beginning of a cogent semiotic objection against the market in question.

One way to understand the force of the semiotic objection I'm constructing is to imagine that you are ready to give away some non-market good. The case of intimacy is particularly powerful. At the moment of the giving, suppose the person to whom you are giving the gift offers to pay for the closely related market good, thereby communicating their preference for purchasable intimacy over the gifted kind. Suppose further that you find out that this is not an isolated incident, but something this person does regularly. Wouldn't we think that this person has the wrong attitude toward love? And notice that their attitude is not the product of some socially constructed fact about the meaning of money or markets. It is simply a product of the fact that choice reveals preference and that you can't buy love.⁸

III. FROM INITIAL EXAMPLES TO COGENT SEMIOTIC OBJECTIONS

Granted, we are unlikely to meet with such a character and we are less likely still to be able to ground legal limits to markets on this kind of semiotic worry.⁹ To get from this point to a

cogent semiotic objection will require some additional work. First, we need to show that the preference expressed by engaging in certain market transactions really has, as one of its objects, a valuable non-market good. This requires that the market good *resembles* and *excludes* the non-market good, that the non-market good is available, and that the ‘costs’ of obtaining the non-market good are not prohibitive. Second, since it is difficult to claim that the coercive powers of the state should be mobilized to prevent people from expressing certain noxious preferences, we need to expand our thinking away from the question of what an individual choice might mean and towards the question of what it means when society permits certain markets.

Let’s begin with the first task. When does trading in a market good mean that you prefer it to a non-market good? I might, for instance, use my limited time and resources to eat a hamburger. I could have spent that time with my family or that money on preventative medicine. But eating a hamburger doesn’t express a preference for hamburgers over family or health.

There are a few things we can say in response. First, the difference in the three cases above is that the bought-good is closely related to the gifted-good. When you buy a specific hamburger, even if you aren’t expressing much about how you value family or health, you are saying something about the other available hamburgers that you decided not to buy. Likewise, when you purchase the purchasable kind of “admiration,” you are saying something about how you value the other closely related kinds of admiration like, e.g., the kind that is a response to qualities taken to be admirable. Just like the two hamburgers for sale, both the purchasable

“admiration” and the actual admiration are, to some degree, capable of fulfilling the same function.

Second, though buying a hamburger doesn't exclude caring for family or health, paying for my vote does exclude receiving my vote as a gift. In contrast, a bought acknowledgement *doesn't* exclude getting one as a gift. In this way, the semiotic objection I am making is more powerful when we are considering votes than when we are considering acknowledgements. Intimacy is more complex. Can I give you my love as a gift if I'm also giving you some closely related love-like service as part of an exchange? It may depend on psychological facts which are unique to different individuals.

Third, everything here is a matter of degree. An isolated hamburger doesn't show that you value hamburgers over family or health. But if you regularly hit the pub instead of playing with your kids, you are communicating something about your attitudes toward these things. If you buy sex a couple of times, that doesn't mean you don't value gifted-sex. But if you forego altogether the kind of intimacy that can't be purchased, instead pursuing the kind that can be bought, you are saying that you prefer the bought kind. I might wonder about such a person: “Don't they value real intimacy?”

Sometimes the gifted-goods I have mentioned are not available or come at too high a 'cost.' Just as I do not say anything about my attitudes toward the hamburgers that were

unavailable when I purchase *this* hamburger, I do not say anything about the gifted-intimacy that was unavailable when I purchase this sex act.

That may very well be true. P may not be able to receive Q's intimacy as a gift because Q doesn't really love P. So P's purchase of some closely related good from Q might not signal P's preference for the bought-kind over the gifted-kind of love. But though the gifted kind of love isn't always available, the opportunity to cultivate the chance of receiving it is. So P does signal *something* about P's attitude when P consistently buys the one and decide not to pursue the other. Likewise, when I buy a shirt, I'm saying something fairly strong about my preferences for this shirt over similarly priced shirts that are readily available. I'm *also* saying something, though something much weaker, about the shirts that are not immediately available (perhaps because they are significantly more expensive or located further away). The preference I'm communicating is for the shirt I buy over the other shirts and whatever time, effort or money would be required to secure them.

Circumstances might be such that, in order to receive gifted-love, I'd need to invest lots of time and effort building a relationship. So if I purchase the purchasable kind of 'love,' what I'm really expressing is my preference for purchasable 'love' and time and effort I can spend elsewhere over gifted-love and some money. But even in this case, there is still some attitude I'm expressing towards gifted-love. Even though the exact preference I express may be highly variable, there is still a connection between the purchase of a good and the expression of a preference. And notice that this connection is not socially constructed.

A related objection goes like this: I might want some special type of sex act that my partner isn't willing to engage in. When I purchase this sex act, I'm not simply signaling my preference for bought-sex over gifted-sex. I'm signaling my preference for bought-sex-of-type-X over gifted-sex-of-type-Y. That preference doesn't show that I value purchased-sex over real intimacy.

Like the previous objection, this one makes use of the fact that goods don't always come bundled in nice discrete packets that make for easy comparisons. Our pursuit of certain goods often fails to secure the good in question, and so we are really pursuing just the chance of receiving the good. Likewise, sometimes two goods differ in more than one way. I might buy the blue shirt over the brown pants. Does this show I value blue over brown? Or that I value shirts over pants? Or can we only say that I prefer this blue shirt to these brown pants? But what if the articles of clothing are priced differently? And what if the pants are all the way on the other side of the store?

Similarly, if we said to some vote-buying politician, "don't you care about the actual approval of the electorate?" they might respond, "Of course I do! But I also care about getting elected and if I don't buy the votes, then I might not get enough of that actual approval. Better to buy up this election." The politician must choose between chance-of-actual-approval-sufficient-for-winning-the-election and certainty-of-bought-approval-sufficient-for-winning-the-election.

Does preferring certainty here show anything about the politician's attitude towards actual approval?

We can concede ground to these objections.¹⁰ It is not true that *anytime* someone buys votes, sex, acknowledgements or similar goods, they are expressing the wrong attitude towards love, respect, admiration, approval, etc. But we don't need such a strong claim to ground a cogent semiotic objection. To understand why, we need to distinguish between two different ways of understanding the debate about commodification. On the one hand, we may be conducting a debate about public policy by asking when a political authority should ban or limit the sale of certain goods. On the other hand, we may be asking more personal questions about what market transactions we should be willing to engage in. Semiotic objections, including the one developed here, are easiest to understand when they address the personal question. But that does not mean they are irrelevant with respect to the political issue. What I've shown is that, *sometimes* when we buy certain market goods, we are expressing the wrong attitude toward the goods we can't buy (love, admiration, etc.). Individually, this point may lead to the conclusion that, because of the value of the things that can't be bought or sold, we should avoid markets in related goods. The reason I don't engage in markets for sex or acknowledgements is that doing so would express preferences I don't endorse. Extending this kind of reasoning to society at large may help us deal with some of the worries expressed above. Even if we admit that there are circumstances where a politician wouldn't express the wrong attitude towards real approval by buying up an election, we can still maintain that we *collectively* express the wrong attitude towards real approval by allowing the market in votes.

Here is another example to illustrate these claims. It is now possible to buy Facebook likes, Twitter followers, Instagram followers and other things to increase your social media exposure.¹¹ Suppose one comes to realize that real admiration can't be bought. That might be a good reason to avoid the market for likes. But someone might object: maybe there is no other way to get the social media exposure you seek. If such a person bought likes, *they* wouldn't be expressing a noxious preference. It's not that they prefer fake admiration to real admiration, it's just that they prefer significant-social-media-exposure-with-fake-admiration to inadequate-social-media-exposure-with-real-admiration. So it wouldn't be right to critique this market exchange on semiotic grounds. But if we expand our thinking away from individual preferences and towards the preferences expressed by society, we might realize that the market in admiration-like-goods excludes or obscures our collective ability to give away real admiration over social media. That could be a reason to ban that market or, at least, it is a reason to discourage, disincentivize, or limit such market exchanges.¹²

IV. ARE THESE SEMIOTIC CRITIQUES INDEPENDENT?

It is open, at this point, for Brennan and Jaworski to respond in this way: sometimes, permitting a market will exclude the giving or receiving of the more valuable non-market good. In such cases we have a legitimate objection to the market, but it is an objection based on the negative consequences of allowing that market and is, therefore, not a *semiotic* objection. In other cases, the existence of the market *doesn't* exclude the more valuable non-market good. In these instances, there is no objection to the market, semiotic or otherwise.

In this vein, Brennan and Jaworski (2015a) write:

Some apparently semiotic objections to markets are parasitic on nonsemiotic objections. Some critics of sweatshop labor, for example, claim it communicates disrespect because it is exploitative. This is not a true semiotic objection. These critics are not claiming that there are at least two things wrong with sweatshop labor—that it communicates disrespect and that it is exploitative. For them, if sweatshops did not involve wrongful exploitation, then sweatshop work would not communicate disrespect. (p. 1056)

Applied to the examples from above, the claim would be that sometimes purchasing sex, acknowledgements or votes makes giving and receiving love, admiration or approval more difficult. In these cases, there may be something wrong with such markets. But there are not two things wrong: that the markets make the gifting of valuable non-market goods more difficult *and* that they communicate the wrong attitude toward those goods. The claim seems to be: if the market didn't make the giving and receiving of valuable non-market goods more difficult, then the market wouldn't communicate the wrong attitude towards these non-market goods.

To see the limitations of this kind of reasoning, imagine that I were to casually toss a bowling ball out my fourth floor window. You think that this shows that I have the wrong attitude toward the bodily integrity of the pedestrians below. I might defend my action by saying: If I hit someone, then there is some objection to what I've done, but the objection isn't about my

attitude, it is about the harm I've caused. If I hit no one, then there is no objection to my action, semiotic or otherwise. Of course, my defense of tossing bowling balls is absurd. What shows that I have the wrong attitude toward the pedestrians below is the fact that I *risks* harming them. Whether or not I actually harm someone, it is legitimate to critique my careless attitude.

We can reply to Brennan and Jaworski in a similar fashion. Trading in certain market goods sometimes threatens our ability to give and receive the related non-market good. When sex is for sale, that *might* make real intimacy more difficult to come by. If I buy or sell sex, I'm therefore showing the wrong attitude toward real intimacy whether or not my individual purchase does, in fact, make real intimacy less likely. When "admiration" is for sale, that *might* make real admiration harder to give and receive. Engaging in the market for "admiration" therefore shows that I have the wrong attitude toward admiration. Likewise, allowing an expansion of the market for admiration-like-goods can show that we collectively have the wrong attitude towards admiration, even if that particular expansion doesn't exclude the giving and receiving of real admiration.

As Brennan and Jaworski note, actions often have the meaning they do *in virtue* of the likely consequences of the action. Tossing a glass of water into the face of my rival signals disrespect because my action generally causes people discomfort and distress. But we do not always require that the action has that particular consequence in order for it to mean what it means. Even if, owing to some strange preference of my rival, he isn't discomforted by the water, my action *still* signals disrespect. Likewise, even if some small expansion of the market

doesn't have the consequence of making love, admiration or respect more difficult to give and receive, allowing that expansion still shows that you have the wrong attitude towards these valuable non-market goods.

Jaworski and Brennan's paper addresses the worry that, when we buy and sell a certain good, we express inappropriate attitudes toward the good being exchanged. What I have tried to show is that when we allow the buying and selling of certain goods, we are expressing inappropriate attitudes – not toward the things we buy and sell – but toward the closely related goods that can't be bought or sold. And unlike the attitudes that Jaworski and Brennan consider, the attitude we express by pursuing certain kinds of market-goods over closely related non market-goods is not simply a contingent social phenomenon, but necessarily connected to the act of buying.

V. THE SEMIOTIC CASE AGAINST MARKETS IN VOTES

I have so far focused on intimacy, admiration and approval and on some related market goods. Because the preference we express by allowing the market depends on many factors—how 'expensive' the non-market goods are, how likely the market is to exclude the gifting of the valuable non-market goods, the relative value of the market and non-market goods—I have tried to avoid giving any final verdict on markets in sex, votes, acknowledgements, and Facebook likes. But pressed to say which semiotic objection constitutes the best case for limiting the market, I'll stake my claim on votes.¹³

Brennan (2012) considers markets in votes. He distinguishes between cases where someone is paid to vote, but not to vote for a particular candidate, and those where a person is paid to vote for a particular candidate. I agree with Brennan that there is nothing wrong with cases of the first kind, since being paid simply to vote doesn't express the wrong attitude towards political approval. With regard to cases where we are paid to vote for a specific candidate, Brennan distinguishes four cases: (a) where both the buyer and seller justifiably believe that the candidate would promote the common good, (b) where the buyer but not seller justifiably believe the candidate would promote the common good, (c) where seller but not the buyer justifiably believe that the candidate would promote the common good and (d) where neither the buyer nor the seller believe the candidate would promote the common good. Brennan admits that there is something wrong in cases (b) - (d), but he doesn't think it is a matter of semiotics. In contrast, I think we have *semiotic* reasons for objecting to all four cases (a) - (d) and to markets in votes more generally.

Selling a vote precludes giving it away. A bought-vote and a gifted-vote closely resemble one another and both can get you elected. The connection between votes and a certain kind of political approval strikes me as important and worth maintaining. So the gifted vote, insofar as it is capable of maintaining this connection, is more valuable than a purchased vote. When we allow a market in votes, we therefore express the wrong attitude towards this important kind of political approval. And this objection applies even when both the buyer and the seller of the vote justifiably believe that the candidate in question is the best candidate.

In closing, it is worth emphasizing that goods which can't be bought – goods that involve the admiration, approval, love and respect of other human beings – are things that most of us desperately want. If it really is true that these things can be given away but can't be bought or sold, then when we buy and sell closely related and potentially exclusionary goods, we are expressing attitudes toward love, admiration, approval and respect that are inconsistent with what we all believe is the exceptional value of these things. That may be a sufficient semiotic reason to put some limits on markets.¹⁴

¹ For a complete list of *non* semiotic objections see Brennan and Jaworski 2015a: 1053-4. For the claim that the moral imperative is to *revise* our semiotics instead of avoiding the market, see *ibid.*, 1068-71

² Sandel shows that he is sensitive to the limitations of the "expresses the wrong attitude" critique. He says that if we want to claim that a market in some good expresses the wrong attitude toward that good, we would first have to show that there is a proper or fitting attitude to take toward the good in question. But what is the fitting attitude to take toward, for instance, kidneys? Is the fitting attitude established by social convention? If so, then it is easily malleable. Changing social practices will affect the propriety of our attitudes. Is the proper attitude, instead, determined by the nature of the good in question? If so, then semiotic objections will rest on dubious metaphysics. See Sandel 2000: 106. It should be noted that when Sandel worries about conventional meanings, he is not anticipating Brennan and Jaworski's critique. Sandel's point is: if the appropriate attitude toward some good is fixed by convention, then changing social conventions will mean that different attitudes are now appropriate. In making this point, Sandel assumes that allowing a market in some good essentially communicates certain attitudes. What Brennan and Jaworski argue is that markets have no essential meaning.

³ Brennan and Jaworski 2015a: 1073. See also Brennan and Jaworski 2015b.

⁴ There are a number of objections to this way of putting things that I'll address below. The point I'm making here is not simply about opportunity costs, otherwise the semiotic objection I'm developing would apply to *any* market transaction. (By engaging in the market, we lose out on the chance to do something more valuable!). The fact that gifted-sex and bought-sex are closely related and (purportedly) fulfill the same human need is essential to the argument.

⁵ See Jaworski and Brennan 2015b: x – xi.

⁶ Someone might object: you can admire someone for their generosity. In such a case, it appears that the admiration is purchased, but appearances here are deceptive. You might admire someone for having given you money. But you do not exchange the attitude for the money. If you did, then you won't admire them for being generous, you would "admire" them in order to hold up your end of the bargain.

⁷ Jaworski and Brennan have given away acknowledgements *in addition to selling them*. Some of the very same people who bought an acknowledgement received one as a gift. See Brennan and Jaworski 2015b: ix. By doing this, Jaworski and Brennan admit the main point of this paragraph: the gifted-good really is different from the bought-good.

⁸ Jaworski and Brennan consider some related cases and conclude, "... the issue here is not about commodification per se. Rather, it is about transgressing the boundaries of a relationship by communicating estrangement ... when that is not the nature of the relationship" (Brennan and Jaworski 2015a: 1073-4). The fact that the offer of money communicates estrangement, they would claim, is an example of conventional meaning. This is a strategy that Brennan and Jaworski employ regularly, claiming that our objections to various markets aren't *really* about the markets, but about something else. But since you can't get love through a market exchange, and since the expansion of the market in this case precludes the reciprocal gifting of real love, it *is* the market (and the preference expressed through the market exchange) that is objectionable.

⁹ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pressing this point.

¹⁰ Since these objections rest on the claim that choice does not always express a preference, the defender of markets should feel wary. If there were not a strong connection between what I choose and what I prefer, then the standard consequentialist arguments for free markets lose their force. Such arguments require, among other assumptions, that individuals choose in accord with their preferences and that the satisfaction of preferences contributes to individual welfare. See Satz (2010) p. 17-21 for a summary of the relevant theorems in welfare economics, including some criticism of the ethical relevance of these theorems. See also Sen (1987): Chapter 2.

¹¹ See, for example, <https://www.getyourlikes.co.uk/>, <http://www.buy-cheap-social.com/>, or <http://www.buylikesandfollowers.net/>.

¹² Brennan and Jaworski seem to hold the strong thesis that no semiotic considerations can justify any limits on a market (Brennan and Jaworski 2015a: 1058).

¹³ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pushing me here.

¹⁴ Thanks to Peter Jaworski and Jason Brennan for writing the paper prompting this reply. Special thanks to Peter for his enthusiasm and encouragement. Thanks also to Dave Backer, Ben Bryan, Christian Coons, Ryan Fischbeck, Amy Kurzweil, Michael Weber, Mark Wells, the Bowling Green State University Graduate Student's Writing Group, two anonymous reviewers and audiences at Bowling Green State University, The Ninth Annual Felician Ethics Conference, the College of Wooster and the Long Island Philosophical Society for helpful comments on earlier drafts.

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