

Bioethics Research: Contemporary Debates
Spring Semester 2012**Unfit for the Future: The Need for Moral Bioenhancement****Prof. Dr. Julian Savulescu, Ph.D.**Director of The Oxford Centre for Neuroethics, Director of the Oxford Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics,
Director of The Institute for Science and Ethics, The Oxford Martin School**Date:** Monday 05 March 2012 12:15 – 14:00**Location:** Hörsaal 2 im Klinikum 1 (Spitalstrasse 21) 2 OG

Abstract: Unfit for the Future: The Need for Moral Bioenhancement. The greatest problems of the 21st century - climate change, environmental degradation, terrorism, poverty, global inequality, mass migration, depletion of resources, infectious diseases, abuse and neglect of children - are predominantly the result of human choice and behaviour. The greatest problems humanity now faces are not the result of external threat, but are the result of human choice. They are caused by human moral limitations.

Human moral psychology has been shaped by its evolutionary history. It is characterized by aggression, restricted altruism, partiality to kin and in-group members, hostility and disregard of out-group members, bias towards the near future and limited co-operation including free riding. These dispositions have generated common sense moralities which are characterized by strong prohibitions against harming in-group members, few requirements for beneficence or aiding, especially out-group members, a causal sense of responsibility which places greater weight on the consequences of acts in the near future, affecting in-group members, with little consideration given to the foreseeable consequences of omissions. These dispositions and articulated moral norms expose humanity to unprecedented threats in the modern world of advanced technology and global community. Liberal democracy increases the threat our limited moral dispositions pose to our survival and flourishing. I will focus on terrorism, global poverty and climate change. I argue that we should not rest content with our current strategies for addressing these problems. I argue that we should look to not only policies tailored to our moral limitations, but to altering the biological dispositions which contribute to these limitations. I sketch briefly how this might be possible. I argue that research into human moral bioenhancement is an urgent priority.

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