

The Debate about Enhancement: Chances, Risks and Possible Limits

Graduate Seminar (Hauptseminar)
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Course Description

This graduate seminar (Hauptseminar) “The Debate about Enhancement: Questioning Chances, Risks and Possible Limits” is part of *The Enhancing Life Project* organized by the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, in conjunction with the Protestant Theology Faculty at Ruhr University Bochum, funded by the John Templeton Foundation. I participate in this interdisciplinary cooperation with my postdoctoral project “Government of the Self: Towards an Anthropological Rethinking of Humanity”. My project will be divided into two main parts: In the first part, philosophical anthropology will be spelled out by building a bridge from Kant to Nietzsche in order to develop an *exemplary ethic*. The second part deals with the question in which way that exemplary ethic gives *orientation* in biotechnological development.

Against this background, the graduate seminar will be in affiliation to the second part of my postdoctoral project. In this seminar, we aim to discuss the chances, risks and possible limits of the new enhancement technologies by understanding the current debate: How do the different camps, the bio-conservative strand, the middle-path and the post-humanist strand, underpin their argumentation? In the first step, we will consider what enhancement means. So far, there is no definite notion of enhancement: rather it is understood from different perspectives. In the second step, we will have a closer look at three main types to define enhancement: treatment vs. perfection, nature vs. artificiality and on a broader lever: making life better. In the second step, we will examine the chances, risks and possible limits of enhancement *without a priori* restricting any technological development. The leading questions, thereby, will be raised as follows: Do we *ethically* want to put everything into practice that we can? Are we not rather challenged to think through possible limits *beyond* any essentialist pitfalls but at the same time without limiting technological progress a priori?

1. Week of April 18: Introduction
2. Week of April 25: Defining Enhancement I: Treatment vs. Perfection

Text: Allen Buchanan et al., *From Chance to Choice. Genetics and Justice*, Cambridge: University Press, 2000, pp. 110-125

3. Week of May 2: Defining Enhancement II: Nature vs. Artificiality

Text: Kurt Bayertz, *Die menschliche Natur und ihr moralischer Status*, in: ders. (Hg.), *Die menschliche Natur*, Paderborn: mentis, 2005, pp. 9-31.

4. Week of May 9: Defining Enhancement III: Making Life better

Text: John Harris, *Enhancing Evolution- The Ethical Case for Making Better People*, Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007, pp. 36-58.

5. Week of May 16: Mapping the Debate I: The bio-conservative strand 1

Text: Jürgen Habermas, *Die Zukunft der menschlichen Natur. Auf dem Weg zu einer liberalen Eugenik*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, pp. 105-125.

6. Week of May 23: The bio-conservative strand 2

Text: Michael J. Sandel, *The Case Against Perfection. Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering*, Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 2007, pp.1-24; pp. 85-100.

7. Week of May 30: The bio-conservative strand 3

Text: Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future. Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*, London: Profile Books, 2002, pp. 129-177.

8. Week of June 6: Mapping the Debate II: The post-humanist strand 1

Text: Nick Bostrom, *Why I Want to be a Posthuman when I Grow Up*, in: Bert Gordijn/Ruth Chadwick (Hg.), *Medical Enhancement and Posthumanity*, Milton Keynes: Springer, 2008, pp. 137-158.

9. Week of June 13: The post-humanist strand 2

Text: Julian Savulescu, *Procreative Beneficence: Why We Should Select the Best Children*, in: Ruth Chadwick et al. (Hg.), *The Bioethics Reader. Editor's Choice*, Malden/Oxford: Blackwell, 2007, pp. 434-446.

10. Week of June 20: Mapping the Debate III: A middle path

Text: Jan Christoph Heilinger, *Unterwegs zum neuen Menschen? Die Veränderung der menschlichen Natur durch biotechnologisches "Enhancement"*, in: Volker Gerhardt/Julian Nida-Rümelin (Hg.), *Evolution in Natur und Kultur*, Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2010, pp. 223-240.

11. Week of June 27: Arguments based on Autonomy

Text: Onora O'Neill, *Autonomy and Trust in Bioethics*, Cambridge: University Press, 2002, pp.73-95.

12. Week of July 4: On Economic Constraints

Text: Debra Satz, *Why Some Things Should not be for Sale. The Moral Limits of Markets*, Oxford: University Press, 2010, pp.171-206.

13. Week of July 11: The case of genetic engineering

Text: Frances M. Kamm, *Bioethical Prescriptions. To Create, End, Choose, and Improve Lives*, Oxford: University Press, 2013, pp. 291-325.

14. Week of July 18: Final Discussion

Text: Giovanni Maio, *Medizin ohne Maß? Vom Diktat des Machbaren zu einer Ethik der Besonnenheit*, Stuttgart: Trias, 2014, pp. 80-104.