

Public Reason and Moral Bioenhancement

Elvio Baccharini

Department of Philosophy

University of Rijeka

ebaccarinii@ffri.hr

ABSTRACT

The Rawlsian model of public justification is proposed for the assessment of politics of moral enhancement, in alternative to the neo-republican model proposed in these debates by Robert Sparrow. The central idea of the Rawlsian model of public justification is represented by the liberal principle of legitimacy, although it is extended in relation to the domain that Rawls sees as proper for its application (constitutional essentials). The liberal principle of legitimacy in its extended application requires that a law or public policy be justified on the base of reasons for which we can reasonably expect that other citizens can accept as free and equal citizens. The application is extended to children as prospective agents, as well. From the standpoint of the liberal principle of legitimacy, valid public reasons put forward in the moral enhancement debate are represented by the assessment of whether emotional modulation is progressive or regressive in relation to the capacity of moral judgment. The conclusion is that, at the actual stage of the debate, there are no victorious reasons to endorse any of the two proposals. Consequently, this is a domain of reasonable pluralism. Compulsory moral enhancement is ruled out, but mandatory moral enhancement is allowed. Usages of public funds for researches that concern moral bioenhancement are proper matter of democratic decision making.

KEYWORDS

Moral bioenhancement, moral emotivism, moral rationalism, public reason.

1. Researches have confirmed the neurophysiologic bases of the dispositions of moral relevance. Neurotransmitters, like serotonin or oxytocin, have been proven to influence morally relevant attitudes, like sympathy, trust, aggressiveness or reaction to (un)fairness (Crockett et al., 2010; Crockett et al., 2014; Rakić, 2014).

On this ground, some authors argue for the project of medical bioenhancement – treatments to enhance our morality. Thomas Douglas welcomes the possibility to enhance our moral dispositions, in order to reduce our countermoral dispositions (Douglas, 2008). Persson and Savulescu have rendered the debate even more dramatic (Persson and Savulescu, 2012). They say that there is a worrisome combination of facts in the actual world. On one hand, scientific improvement has led us to the possible destruction of valuable life on our planet. Climate change and environmental destruction require sensible policy changes that imply a reduction of the level of welfare in the developed countries today, as well as increased solidarity with the developing countries. Terrorism is an increasing danger because

of weapons of mass destruction, which implies the reduction of some civil right currently recognized in liberal democracies. On the other hand, our moral psychological endowment is underdeveloped for supporting such changes. The reason derives from our inherited features that suite well with different conditions of living: limited altruism, bias in favour of the immediate, bias in favour of acts vs. omissions, etc. In their thesis, traditional resources of moral enhancement have proved to be insufficient. This is the reason why they propose to support them with the resources of moral bioenhancement. This consists in making use of biotechnologies to improve our morally relevant dispositions.

The debate is already intense and several arguments have been put in it, in favour or in opposition to moral bioenhancement. Robert Sparrow is engaged in framing the debate in political and social terms. He objects to Persson and Savulescu that “their argument neglects the political dimensions of freedom in cases where enhancement is imposed upon other people” (Sparrow, 2014, 26). A great part of the focus of the current debate regards threats to individual freedom from the standpoint of the capacities of the individuals involved. But, says Sparrow, “freedom is also a relation between persons” (Sparrow, 2014, 26). Here it appears as a relevant difference between the relations in education and biological manipulation of behaviour.

The supposed analogy has been impugned by supporters of biomedical moral enhancement (Persson and Savulescu, 2012, 113; DeGrazia, 2014, 366). But Sparrow says that moral education is a communicative action. The educator transmits the messages, but “implicit in this relationship is the requirement that the educator must, if called upon to do so, be able to justify the norms that have shaped the educational project and its content with reasons that the person being educated should accept” (Sparrow, 2014, 26). But the recipient of education can respond with counterarguments. The relation, therefore, is communicative and compatible with the freedom of the recipient of education. On the other hand, biomedical enhancement operates in instrumental or technical mode. The relation is characterized by inequality, because in such a situation a subject simply operates toward a recipient. Sparrow seems to require a real and actual justificatory relation, with the recipients of enhancement actually being able to participate in the justificatory interchange.

In support of his view, Sparrow appeals to the republican view of freedom as non-domination. In biomedical moral enhancement there is a relation of domination, because one person decides about the dispositions she will inculcate in another person. In only one case autonomy is saved in the context of biomedical moral enhancement, i.e. in the situation where an individual makes the decision to enhance herself by developing her own ability to achieve higher-order desires (but I would add preferences and projects, as well) by medicaments. If we accept Sparrow’s view on freedom, it seems that moral bioenhancement is ruled out at the

very beginning of the debate. But I think that we must substitute the conception of freedom endorsed by Sparrow with a different conception of freedom. It is a conception of freedom based on an idea of public justification of laws and policies.

Such a conception is different from Sparrow's in two important ways. In the view expressed by Sparrow in the paper that I summarize above, an agent is treated as free only if she has the role of a discursive active participant in the formative processes that regard her. In the public justificatory view of freedom (that I endorse), an agent is treated as free if we can reasonably expect that public decisions that concern her can be justified to her as a free and equal citizen (actually, or to her as a prospective agent). This means that the justification is based on reasons that she can endorse (are accessible to her) as a free and equal person. The agent may at a certain time be unaware of the justification, and even refuse the justification (for example, in virtue of epistemic laziness, stubbornness, etc.). She is, nonetheless, treated as free and equal because, after respectable reasoning, she can recognize that the reasons treat her as free and equal. For example, this happens if reasons do not deny (a) certain basic rights, liberties and opportunities; (b) the assignment of special priority to them; (c) measures to ensure to all citizens the use of them (Rawls, 1993/2005, 6). Moreover, the reasons must not be related to controversial comprehensive doctrines that may be not accessible to the agent even after respectable reasoning.

One of the advantages of the conception of freedom that I endorse is that it is more realistically applicable. I see an unhelpful idealization and discrepancy with reality in Sparrow's exemplification of his conception of freedom in the domain of education. Relations, there, are mostly paternalistic. For many stages of the child's development, the justificatory exchanges that Sparrow speaks about have only the form of caricature. In such stages, the contribution of the recipient of education consists in the famous 'why, why, why' typical of children. Even in later steps the relation is far from taking place in conditions of equality that would ensure a real communicative exchange.

Another advantage is that the strong requirement for the legitimacy of applying enhancement procedures potentially damages the potential recipient. Namely, the requirement forbids even to apply measures that would certainly increase favourable life conditions for her. Imagine a situation where the intelligence of the prospective agent is enhanced.

Importantly, one of the basic ideas of the concept of freedom that I endorse and, therefore, of public justification is to respect pluralism, with different citizens living with their different conceptions of good life, or simply way of life, in common institutions. Interventions on individuals require particularly strong justification, and frequently may be applied only in a temporarily limited form. Consequently, although the legitimacy of biomedical moral enhancement is not excluded at the very beginning, it is difficult to justify it.

John Harris is engaged in opposing moral bioenhancement and explaining why it damages freedom. It is important to clarify the concept of freedom that is involved: “the ability to choose rationally and freely according to principles and practices that are plausible as candidates for moral action. [...] So far from raising consciousness [...] it may well dull it to the point where the individual is no longer choosing” (Harris, 2014, 372). This is because moral bioenhancement, as formulated by its proponents, consists in direct emotional modulation that bypasses moral reasoning. So, the real loss is the possibility of making reasoned moral choices, because the resulting motivations, deprived of reasoning, would be insufficiently fine-grained. What is pro-social behaviour in a context may be anti-social behaviour in wider contexts. In some cases a violent action can be the morally proper action, for example, when we need to shoot a person who wants to kill an innocent person, in order to save the latter (Harris, 2014, 373).

This is a clear basis for public justification that relies on the provision of valid public reasons. Precisely, this is a valid public reason for refusing moral bioenhancement. This, however, does not immediately mean that it is a victorious, conclusive, reason.

To Harris’s objection that appeals to the insufficiently fine-grained and context sensitive reactions of people emotionally modulated, Persson and Savulescu answer that some dispositions, like a low level of empathy and a high level of aggression are always opposed to what we require from morality. Even if a certain level of aggression might be required for moral life, anger must be proportionate to the size of the offence, and a proper sense of justice is needed for this proportionality, as well as for directing it to the right people.

This, however, is not a sufficient reply to Harris. He appeals to the fact that the valence of emotions changes, not only to variations in gradation. Sometimes, a high level of aggression is the proper reaction, like when we need to shoot a terrorist in order to save a group of people. What we need is not moral bioenhancement, but sophisticated reasoning, which in Harris’s view means making reasonable use of political and moral theories. Thus, even in cases when noble moral emotions (altruism, sympathy, etc.) are not felt, or they are not felt for particular groups, the answer is not using biomedical emotional modulation. “That is when you need moral philosophy, moral reasoning. [...] Moral reasoning is needed to identify the appropriate objects for sympathy, empathy and the sort of generalized love that is the conclusion of a moral argument” (Harris, 2013, 170).

The dispute, therefore, has as one of its main focuses the nature of reliable moral judgment. Harris is clearly on the rationalistic side: “To believe that emotions can deliver answers to moral dilemmas is like believing that the gut is an organ of thought, or one that can answer complex, combined theoretical and empirical, questions. [...] Ethical judgments cannot, literally cannot, be felt. There

is no sense organ for such a feeling” (Harris, 2013a, 288). Moral judgment, in Harris’s view, is exclusively a matter of an argument toward a conclusion.

But it is important to remember that proposers of biomedical moral enhancement through emotional modulation do not oppose the cognitive role in morality. Recipients may be ready to accept emotional modulation as a supplementary resource only. Douglas, for example, says that even if it was true that cognitive enhancement is the privileged resource for moral enhancement, this does not eliminate the possibility of using emotional enhancement as a further resource. To those who say that it is better to achieve enhancement by reasoning only, Douglas replies by asking why not recur to emotional modulation if cognitive resources fail (Douglas, 2013, 163; see also Douglas, 2014, 77-79)?

Such recourse is needed, because racial stereotypes, or false beliefs, are not always the (primary) causes of racism. He appeals to neurological researches that indicate the presence of racial bias in cases where there are no false or stereotypical beliefs, and “results from neuroimaging studies suggest that implicit racial bias and stereotypical beliefs are mediated by distinct neural systems; the bias is associated with amygdala activity, which is also implicated in mediating fear and other basic emotions, while the stereotypic beliefs appear to be mediated by neural systems associated with other rational and cognitive processes. Moreover, even if racial aversion was created by cognitive processes, it is not excluded that it might be attenuated by other means than the correction of cognitive flaws (Douglas, 2013, 164).

2. All participants in the dispute agree that we must improve the actual situation with morality and that part of the moral distortions in the actual situation is represented by emotional distortions of moral insights. The two sides are opposed in relation to the solution: emotional enhancement as one of the resources vs exclusive cognitive enhancement. The former side embraces the view that there will always be a strong and influent emotional component in morality, and thus part of the needed improvement is represented by emotional enhancement. Authors in the opposed side say that progress consists in eroding emotional influence on morality, as well as in the affirmation of rationality. Rationality can help us to overcome actual emotional limits, like limited empathy.

I am sceptical about the strength of rationality affirmed by Harris, in particular if we speak about rationality in the form of moral theories. The first question that we can ask in relation to this is: which moral theory? Let’s see some rationalistic moral theories. One of them is represented by attempts of reducing the whole of morality to a utilitarian calculus. It is difficult to endorse such a view without empathy for the whole of humanity, or, at least, a vast part of it (or, maybe, of all sentient beings) – a person who is uninterested about other beings

will hardly endorse such a view. The emphatic and sympathetic components appear foundational. There are views that appeal to rational models of behaviour as the foundation of morality, like in David Gauthier's proposal (Gauthier, 1987). Here there are problems, as well, remarked by authors who indicate that there can always be a situation when it is rational to cheat, and thus such rationalistic foundation of morality fails. Such criticisms affirm the necessity to recur to moral emotions in protection of morality (Gaus, 2011, 53-100). There are rationalistic views that attempt to derive the whole of morality from the logic of moral language (Hare, 1963; Hare, 1981), or from that of morally relevant concepts (Gewirth, 1978). Such attempts are far distant from being victorious in ethical debates. Perhaps, one might say, improvement can appear in virtue of cognitive enhancement. But, can we say this, after years and years of engagement in this project of people whom we can count among the most intelligent?

In general, new moral theories that find true answers to moral questions are not sufficient to attain moral improvements. Moral improvements follow from various sources: historical processes, changes of social relations due to changes of productive resources and economic activities, changes in the range and strength of empathy and sympathy, capacities of groups to affirm what matters to them, deliberation, reflection, reasoning, etc. Things being as they are, the reasonable view appears to make use of all possible resources that we have. I find the dilemma moral/emotional enhancement vs cognitive enhancement to be a wrong one. Instead of looking for general paradigms that establish whether the essential of moral development is emotional or rational, it is important to see in specific cases what the relevant failures that need improvement are, and what are the feasible improvements. I think that it is improbable that abstract reasoning alone can bring improvements. Reasoning, moral reasoning as well as reasoning in other fields, depends on various influences, among else on emotional commitments that influence us in varying attribution of strength and weight to pieces of evidence or reasoning. There might not be anything irrational in attributing more weight to some evidence instead of some other evidence, or requiring some level of corroboration of a conclusion instead of some other levels of corroboration under the influence of emotional sensibility. The important thing may be whether the emotional commitments are proper. One solution might be to strengthen the role of reasoning. But is it sufficient? We have no guarantee according to our actual knowledge, and it may well be that emotional enhancement is part of what we need for cognitive enhancement. Cultivating emotions might be part of the moral resources and part of what we need for correct moral reasoning. It does not follow a recommendation to bypass moral reflection. I do not propose to leave morality to the exclusive role of intuition, emotion or something that we might call the 'moral nose', nor do I suggest that moral feelings must be confirmed by relying on moral feelings only (cfr. Harris, 2012, 294). Reasoning is important to correct wrong

emotional reaction. It is true that the same emotional capacities (let's say, empathy and sympathy) can lead us to endorsing the right moral response, as well as the wrong moral response. We must always submit to scrutiny of moral reasoning our emotional reactions, including empathic ones. We must verify whether we can really embrace a moral attitude by seeing whether it conforms with the other attitudes that we have, with our past responses, with the principles that we embrace, whether we will be ready to behave coherently with the new attitude... I do not see that any participant in the moral biomedical enhancement debate denies this.

The relevant fact for the concept of public justification that I endorse is that there is no final response about the exact role and weight of rationality and of emotions in morality, and, therefore, about the usefulness of moral bioenhancement. This is important for the legitimacy of possible laws and public policies in relation to moral biomedical enhancement. Another domain of controversy is related to moral pluralism. The objection says that there is no consensus about the content of morality, and, therefore, about the features to enhance. As a consequence, moral bioenhancement would represent an abuse on people who do endorse the view that the induced dispositions are valuable. The reply to this says that we must avoid enhancing on the base of controversial values and favour only values that are not objects of reasonable disagreement between agents who care about morality (DeGrazia, 2014). Similarly, Persson and Savulescu are right in saying that "no state can be morally neutral to other-regarding harm" (Persson and Savulescu, 2014, 40). There are values that we can legitimately protect, as well as other we can legitimately oppose, because in doing this we do not disrespect reasonable pluralism. They are destructive of any kind of society, except, perhaps, of societies that are based on repression and strong coercive control.

The relevant conclusions at this point are:

(a) There is, actually, reasonable disagreement about whether it is in principle possible to realize moral enhancement through biomedical emotional modulation.

(b) There is a space of overlapping consensus about the necessary features of morality on which all reasonable doctrines must converge. Dissenting with moral claims in this area is unreasonable. This matters, because if it were not so, two of the three public policies about moral bioenhancement that I discuss would be immediately ruled out.

Before proceeding to further conclusions let's remember the general principles of justification of public policies and laws. Public policies and laws derive legitimacy on the base of public justification. Public justification is based on valid public reasons, i.e. reasons for which we can reasonably expect that each citizen can accept them as a free and equal citizen. Among such reasons there are principles protective of freedoms. But we must endorse all principles reasonably, in

virtue of the complications of real life conditions. For example, we may be in the situation that we must attenuate the rigour of the principles of justice, inclusive of those protective of freedoms. This might imply weakening the protective space of individuals' sovereignty and allow moral enhancement interventions. However, such weakening always needs particularly strong justification. It is difficult to provide such justification when experts diverge on relevant matters.

3. The reasonable conclusion in virtue of this conception of public justification and of the actual stage of debate distinguished by inconclusiveness about the role of emotions and rationality for moral development, as well as about the limits of moral pluralism, is that public policy and regulation related to biomedical moral enhancement (when it becomes safe and reliable) must be diversified for various contexts. There are convincing arguments that indicate that human behaviour (inclusive of moral behaviour) is influenced by a neurophysiological basis, and nobody seems to deny this. Such neurophysiological basis provokes countermoral emotions and dispositions. There are no conclusive proofs that we can overcome this by moral reasoning alone. But there is no indication, at the moment, that we will have medicaments that can enhance our morality in the sufficiently fine-grained way. Nor that biomedical moral enhancement by itself may be efficacious. Although there are authors who offer valid public reasons to worry about our future without biomedical moral enhancements, their arguments are, for the moment, not victorious. Are, in virtue of this, policies of moral bioenhancement the proper subject of democratic public decision making? In virtue of the absence of victorious public reasons and of the invasiveness of biomedical moral enhancement in the lives of agents, it is probably reasonable (in the Rawlsian sense of respectful of agents as free and equal) not to make moral bioenhancement mandatory. There are people who reasonably believe that biomedical moral enhancement through emotional modulation is pernicious, and, thus, at minimum, it cannot be reasonably imposed to them.

The only possibility of legitimately making moral bioenhancement compulsory as the result of a process of voting grounded on public reasons would be present if we could not avoid this as an urgent public decision.

If there were good public reasons to think that (i) limited altruism and the ideal of individualism and material success leads to Ultimate Harm; (ii) people embrace them under the strong influence of the neurophysiological features of these people; (iii) there are reliable biomedical resources to remove the neurophysiological bases of such dispositions and ideals; (iv) possible side effects are not worrisome, then it would be reasonable to vote about the use of moral bioenhancement, independently of the existence of people who actually oppose these ideas. If the premises were true, respecting their worldviews would cause a

great threat for the rest of humanity, as well as to themselves. This is the reason why moral bioenhancement can be imposed to them. The case is analogous to the notorious Mill's bridge example. In favour of the imposition of moral bioenhancement, here, there is the harm principle, as well as the fact that there would be valid, although inconclusive, public reasons for the people who actually oppose moral enhancement to accept the policy as free and equal agents. After all, without surviving, or in a world rendered a poor place to live in, they would be unable to pursue dispositions and values that they have.

But, if we can postpone the public decision, the proper solution is to do this and respect freedoms of citizens, until we dispose of victorious public reasons. Reasonable pluralism about the opportunity to make use of biomedical moral enhancement, as well as its invasiveness in the lives of people, make it better to leave to individual conscience whether to accept it, or not. It is very difficult to ensure the legitimacy of voting in matters that are so invasive in people's lives. In any event, before voting on such measures that override personal freedoms of people, it is necessary to explore all other, less coercive, possible resources. (Farrelly, 2007, 168-169, 202)

The discussion is, however, strongly hypothetical and provisional. As far as I know, there is no one proposing to apply moral bioenhancement in the actual condition. As Persson and Savulescu say, "We have only argued that we should pursue research into moral bioenhancement, not spray oxytocin in the air" (Persson and Savulescu, 2014, 42). So the question in which I am engaged is whether to apply moral bioenhancement in a prospective situation when technological resources for moral bioenhancement would be safe and efficient.

We do not know now the answers for that situation. Actual projections are based on arguments about the relative role of rationality and emotions in moral deliberation. On the base of the state of the art in this debate, we can say that there is reasonable disagreement about whether applying emotional modulation technology would be progressive or regressive even in conditions when we could have safe and efficient technologies of emotional modulation. Consequently, there is the provisional and conditional conclusion that it is better to leave decisions to individual deliberation, if not pressed by the unavailability of making a common public decision.

A possible alternative to compulsory moral bioenhancement is voluntary moral bioenhancement supported by state incentives, like in Vojin Rakić's proposal (Rakic, 2014; Rakic, 2014a). For some, compulsory enhancement is the only relevant one, because they think that only in such a case bioenhancement can cope with free riding in environmental responsibility, as well as with terrorism. Such intention cannot be satisfied by leaving moral bioenhancement as a free choice (Sparrow, 2014a, 21). But Rakic (Rakic, 2014, 38), as well as Persson and

Savulescu (Persson and Savulescu, 2014, 41) offer convincing reasons for accepting the idea that voluntary moral bioenhancement can offer appreciable results.

The advantage of voluntary moral bioenhancement is that it is a legitimate free choice of individuals. But Sparrow puts a challenge to it, nonetheless. The challenge is related to possible harmful social consequences of even voluntary moral bioenhancement. Precisely, the issue regards threats for equality. Biomedical moral enhancement might create people with more developed moral capacities, who, therefore, would be able to create and participate in superior forms of social cooperation (Lindsay, 2005; Douglas, 2013a, 482-483). As such, they might have a superior moral status, or they may be uninterested in forming a moral community with ordinary humans. Buchanan denies that morally enhanced agents would have a superior moral status, because moral status is a threshold concept (Buchanan, 2009). Douglas refuses Buchanan's thesis, but does not think that differences in moral status are a decisive problem, after all (Douglas, 2013a).

Sparrow is primarily focused on the danger that derives from classifying the morality obtained by single persons in relation to investigations of genetics or neurochemistry. People who are not subject to moral enhancement, as well as people for whom the procedure has produced weaker results, could be discriminated. "The prospect of being able to reliably identify some people as, by biological constitution, significantly and consistently more moral than others would seem to pose a profound challenge to egalitarian social and political ideals. In particular, it raises the question of whether the morally enhanced should have different rights to morally ordinary citizens and perhaps even be granted privileged access to positions of social and political power in order that social and political decisions are made more morally?" (Sparrow, 2014a, 24).

In my view, the crucial question, here, is whether enhanced and, let's say, ordinary agents have an interest in cooperation. There are reasons to think that they do. I rely on an analogy with the actual world. In our actual life we have morally more developed people, some of them at an incomparable level to that of others. But there is no indication that they have in any time required a privileged status in society. Generally, they have been engaged in striking for progress in equality, not for privileges. Think of Martin Luther King, Gandhi, etc.

It is true that people at this level of moral development might create a more developed society in comparison to even the most developed societies in actual world, if they were able to create a society among themselves. Consequently, they may become uninterested to live in society with, let's say, ordinary people, and create their own separate society distinguished by a high level of civic virtues, perhaps similar to the one wished by Jefferson et al. (Jefferson et al., 2014) But, if this happened, there would not be any new inequalities in societies. Enhanced agents would live in their society as equals, and ordinary humans would live in their societies as they do now.

But such a secessionist scenario appears to have really low probability. The realistic scenario is that all these agents would continue to live in the same society. One of the reasons is that the morally enhanced, when they choose with whom to cooperate, do not do this by having in mind interests as their overriding motivation (Wilson, 2014, 35). Moreover, if the morally enhanced decided to form their specific societal projects, it is probable that they would do this for programs that are beneficial for the whole society, like coping with climate change (Marshall, 2014, 29). If anyone is in danger, then these are the morally enhanced people, who, as such, are prone to respect fair terms of cooperation, while other people are subject to the moral limits remarked by the supporters of morally enhancement.

Sparrow worries, nonetheless, that the morally enhanced would have a privileged position. “Of course, there is also a more direct argument to the conclusion that a society that consisted of some people who are morally enhanced and some people who are not might be justified in establishing a differentiated set of citizenship rights. Famously, in *The Republic*, Plato argued that the just society should be ruled by an elite group of Guardians, who would be most able to decide social and political questions in the public interest. Similarly, it might be argued that we should pay more attention to the views of the morally enhanced than those of other citizens when it comes to resolving social and political controversies (Sparrow, 2014a, 24).

Such a scenario, however, has low probability outside of a thought experiment context. What is the ground to think that ordinary people would accept such an order? A different question is related not with the Platonic scenario, but with some plausible conceptions of democracy that might find a politically privileged space for morally enhanced citizens. Such views vary from elitist conceptions of democracy (where the democratic nature of society manifests itself only in the process of election), to epistemic and deliberative conceptions of democracy (Sparrow, 2014a, 24-26). But why would a privileged role for morally enhanced people (provided they are really morally enhanced) represent anything wrong in such contexts (Persson and Savulescu, 2014, 42), provided the privileged position is established democratically, let’s say, by popular voting, or by appointment of an institution of representative democracy? The final judgment on this depends on what the privileged position would mean. If it means privileged access to counsel boards it is difficult to see a threat to democracy. A possible position is that of being part of a body with the right to hold a referendum, if the body is dissatisfied with a law proposed by the government or passed on by the parliament. Such are privileged positions, but the final word is that of the demos.

A different kind of privilege is represented by diversified suffrage. But on what reasons could we think that such a proposal could be accepted in our democratic orders? After all, this does not happen in actual society, despite the actual presence of more developed moral agents (Ram-Tihtin, 2014, 43). What are

the reasons to think that it is more probable that people will attribute to biomedically morally enhanced people diverse suffrage, in comparison with the probability of diverse suffrage to more educated people in the actual world, as Mill required?

Moreover, as Sparrow anticipates, because of being morally enhanced these people would not want leading positions without fair democratic elections (Sparrow, 2014a, 25). It seems probable that morally enhanced people would pursue their public offices with both the openness to participate in fair justificatory debates with all citizens in the justification of public laws and public policies, as well as not being prone to abuse of their power. Otherwise, what does their enhancement consist in? The realistic danger that I see is that society will not be able to make use of the possibility to give the proper public influence to the best people, and not that such people will abuse the situation. But this is only a hypothesis. For a serious thesis, we need serious empirical evidence, for example, in order to establish an analogy with what happens in the actual world in relation to the attribution of leading roles to people distinguished by valuable moral features. I suspect that probably this evidence would show that astute client politicians are more successful than those who embrace moral standing.

A further problem for Sparrow's argument is that it requires the assumption that there is equality in the morality of people in the actual world, which would be subverted by moral bioenhancement. But Persson and Savulescu rightly say that such an equality is not actually present. Moral bioenhancement might be successful in establishing it, instead of subverting it (Persson and Savulescu, 2014, 41). With more caution, Marshall says the same (Marshall, 2014, 29).

More basically, there is the challenge put forward by Wilson. It is not true that morally enhanced people are the best for having leading roles. Other virtues are required, as well, and they may prevail (Wilson, 2014, 36).

Another possible threat remarked by Sparrow is that biomedical moral enhancement will not be effective and we will only wrongly think that some people are morally enhanced. It is probable that such people will abuse the situation (Sparrow, 2014a, 26). I do not particularly fear this possibility. In fact, nothing would change in comparison to the actual world situation, where politicians are frequently in charge in virtue of their ability to show themselves as being different from what they are.

Things may be even less dangerous in a situation where politicians would use bad science that fallaciously confirms their neurophysiological superiority, in comparison to a situation where politicians make use of even more dangerous and manipulative resources to obtain and preserve power. Among else, such resources include potentiating nationalistic and religious opposition, ideological confrontation, and even hate speech against political rivals. The strategy frequently consists in insulating electorates, by picturing political rivals as

disgusting, unreliable, and people who do not even deserve to be listened. So, speaking about political competition in USA, Robert Talisse comments the political rhetoric of both the Left, as well as the Right, which both “promotes the view that all opponents are intellectually defective and thus unworthy of engagement. [...] Apparently [...] one need not actually listen to what one’s opponents say in order to talk to them; talking to them (of course, only when one must) amounts to dismissing them regardless of what they might say. Picking up on this general line, the conservative Michael Savage contends that his liberal opponents – possibly more than half of all adult Americans who vote, mind you – suffer from a ‘mental disorder’ (2005). [...] A similar state of affairs prevails in the world of liberal commentary. For instance, in his ‘fair and balanced’ examination of those with whom he disagrees, the liberal Al Franken (2003) casts those on the Right as ‘lying liars’” (Talisse, 2009, 65). Among the countries that I know better I can remember Berlusconi speaking for years of the communist threat, or about the nationalistic rhetoric in Croatia, as well as in other former Yugoslav countries.

Let’s remember that the question under consideration is whether to make voluntary medical bioenhancement a matter of free choice among individuals, and that only very strong reasons can defeat personal freedoms. Sparrow has not provided such sufficient reasons to defeat voluntary moral bioenhancement as a matter of personal freedom.

On the other hand, supplying public incentives, like in Rakic’s proposal, is legitimately a matter of voting. The main reason regards public disagreement about the effectiveness of moral bioenhancement. I find reasonable the same conclusion in relation to the question of public financial support to researches on medical bioenhancement, which is, after all, the main requirement of Persson and Savulescu.

The real problem that I see in the biomedical moral enhancement project is that it is unrealistic, and, in this, I agree with Sparrow (Sparrow, 2014a, 26-27). Things being as they are, and as they appear to be in the future that we can predict, the positions put forward by proponents of biomedical moral enhancement, in particular of those most worried about the actual situation, i.e. Persson and Savulescu, appear as corresponding to exactly what Miller describes like philosophy as lamentation (Miller, 2013, 228-249). We see a mostly worrisome description of our actual moral psychology as a source of threats for our future in virtue of the instruments at our disposal. The proposal of the way out, however, appears highly improbable. The suggested way out is represented by a technology that still does not exist. We must look for public financial resources for researches needed for it in the same democracies that are unable to care for their long term interests and suffer from limited altruism. In one of the interpretations of the issue, we must expect democratic support for a policy of mandatory biomedical moral enhancement. We must hope in a sufficiently diffused convergence among states in

the application of biomedical moral enhancement. We must hope in the good will of our governments. Finally, we must hope that terrorists will be ready to accept this solution. Well... It seems better to try with some other ways out.

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