



## Arsht Research on Ethics and Community Grant

### Ethical Challenges of Pharmacologic Morality Enhancement

2014-2015

**Faculty:** Shaun P. Brothers, Ph.D.

**Student:** Samuel K. Powell

**Miller School of Medicine and College of Arts and Sciences**

#### Abstract

Moral enhancement refers to the improvement of moral capacities such as sympathy and fairness towards others. Current methods of moral enhancement include moral education and mentoring, consciousnessraising, and public efforts to encourage moral behavior and decision-making. Ethicists have suggested, however, that these methods are insufficient and have highlighted a need for novel approaches to moral enhancement. In response to this need, some have proposed that using biomedical technologies, such as pharmaceuticals, could be useful to bring about moral enhancement. Recent reports suggest that drugs that influence neurotransmission may serve as components of moral *bioenhancement*. With this prospect, however, come many ethical challenges regarding distributive justice, personal identity, the nature of freedom, and moral pluralism. In critically evaluating moral bioenhancement, we will initially take the view that bioenhancement through such means is a form of technology. In this view, we will explore the ethical challenges and address potential solutions to these problems within a conceptual framework that analyzes moral bioenhancement as a technology, bifurcating analysis into the enterprise of moral bioenhancement and the applications of moral bioenhancement. Further, an "Anatomy of Enhancement" has been suggested in which three kinds of moral enhancement are distinguished: motivational improvement, improved insight, and behavioral improvement. We propose to examine the ethical implications and challenges of using pharmaceuticals in each of these separate kinds of moral enhancement. This project seeks to fill an unmet need to critically evaluate and understand the ethical implications of using drugs to enhance morality.

Please do not copy or quote without permission. For more information, please contact the University of Miami Ethics Programs at [ethics@miami.edu](mailto:ethics@miami.edu).