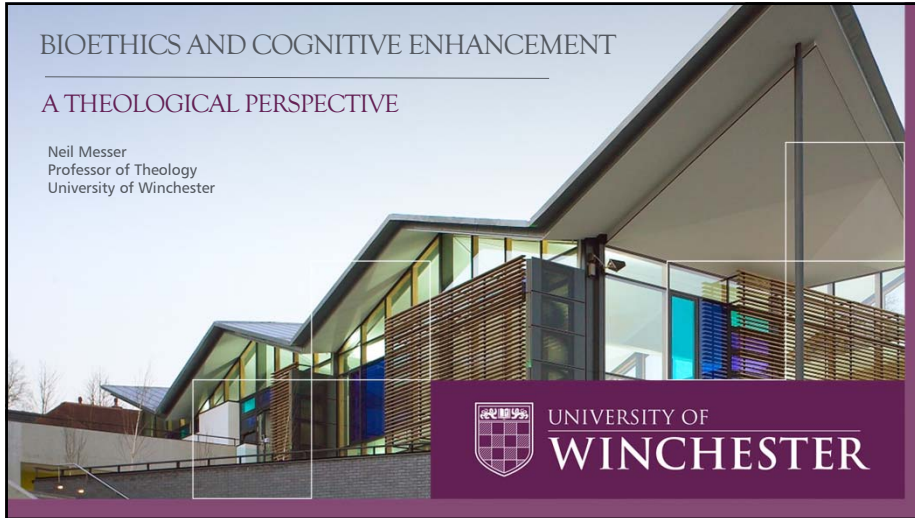


## BIOETHICS AND COGNITIVE ENHANCEMENT

### A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Methylphenidate

and modafinil

are used for...

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...treating narcolepsy, treating ADHD, as 'smart drugs'.

1. *Is there a distinction between these uses?*

2. *How should we evaluate them?*

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## The therapy/enhancement distinction

**Therapy:** interventions aimed at treating or preventing disorders, correcting pathologies, restoring normal function

**Enhancement:** interventions aimed at raising functioning above 'normal'/'natural' levels, or improving a function that is not diseased or pathological

*Is this a real distinction?*

*Does it matter ethically?*

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## The therapy/enhancement distinction...

'does not draw either a morally significant or an explanatorily significant distinction and so fails utterly to be useful' (Harris 2007:46)

## The therapy/enhancement distinction...

Is both *real* and *morally significant*:

'In caring for the health of their children, parents do not cast themselves as designers or convert their children into products of their will or instruments of their ambition. The same cannot be said of parents who pay large sums to select the sex of their children ... or who aspire to bioengineer their children's intellectual endowments or athletic prowess' (Sandel 2007: 49).

## Health, disease, and the therapy/enhancement distinction

*Philosophical debates:*

**WHO** (2007 [1948]): 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being ...'

**Boorse** (1977): 'biostatistical theory': objective, scientific and value-free?

**Wakefield** (1992): diseases/disorders as 'harmful dysfunctions'.

**Megone** (1998): Aristotelian teleological account based on concept of 'natural function'.

*Disability critiques:*

Medicalisation of human difference

Concepts of normal/natural function (Amundson 2000)

## A theological account (Messer 2013)

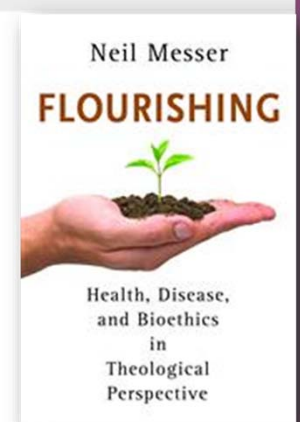
Humans as creatures

Suggests a teleological account, but different from Megone:

Goods, goals and ends of human life given in creation, known from revelation

Epistemological humility and openness to critical voices (including disability critiques)

Supports a therapy/ enhancement distinction



# The ethics of therapy and enhancement

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# A Christian mandate for therapy

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## Christian bioethical reasoning: a proposal (Messer 2011: ch 1)

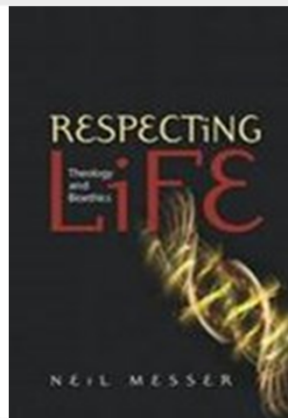
Christian narrative of creation, salvation and future hope.

Can a bioethical practice be part of a life of faithful response to this narrative?

In line with it, opposed to it or an attempted substitute for God's work?

'Diagnostic questions' to aid discernment:

1. *Imago dei* or *sicut deus*?
2. Attitude to the material world (including our bodies)?
3. Attitude to our neighbours?
4. Good news to the poor?
5. Attitude to past failures?



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# The ethics of PCE

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## *Imago dei or sicut deus?*

'I propose both the wisdom and the necessity of intervening in what has been called the natural lottery of life, to improve things by taking control of evolution and our future development to the point, and indeed beyond the point, where we humans will have changed ... into a better species altogether' (Harris 2007:4-5)

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## Good news to the poor?

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## Attitude to the neighbour

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## Attitude to failure

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## Attitude to the material world – including our own bodies

'The radical cannot forgive God for having created what is' (Bonhoeffer 2005: 155)

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