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# The Ethical and Moral Possibilities of Influencing Human Decisions Through Solutions Proposed by Transhumanists: A Perspective on Love and Human Relationships

Etyczne i moralne możliwości wpływania na ludzkie decyzje  
poprzez rozwiązania proponowane przez transhumanizm.  
Nowe spojrzenie na miłość i relacje międzyludzkie

**ABSTRACT:** The transhumanist vision seeks to enhance human decision-making, particularly in romantic relationships, through methods like “love drugs.” This work critically evaluates the transhumanist proposal for using “love drugs” and contrasts it with the Thomistic perspective. The assessment draws on the doctrine of St Thomas Aquinas, as presented by Polish Dominican Father Jacek Woroniecki, former rector of the Catholic University of Lublin and professor of moral theology at the Angelicum College. The analysis is structured into four sections. The first section discusses the transhumanist proposal of using “love drug.” The second one offers the Thomistic proposal for analysing the problem of enhancing human love. In the third section, it is the Thomistic questions about purpose in the context of the transhumanist “love drug” that come to the fore. Finally, in the assessment of the transhumanist proposal for enhancing feelings by means of the “love drug” the transhumanist method of technological enhancement is compared to the Thomistic method of educating human emotions, while the better approach to align with human well-being and ethical integrity is evaluated. This study aims to determine whether transhumanist methods align with human well-being and ethical principles or whether the Thomistic approach provides a more fulfilling path toward authentic happiness.

**KEYWORDS:** love, emotions, decision-making process, transhumanism, human enhancement, human relationships, St Thomas Aquinas, Thomism, Jacek Woroniecki

**ABSTRAKT:** Transhumanistyczna wizja dąży do usprawnienia ludzkiego procesu decyzyjnego, zwłaszcza w romantycznych związkach, za pomocą środków farmakologicznych

(*love drugs*). Niniejsza praca krytycznie ocenia transhumanistyczną propozycję stosowania takich środków i przeciwstawia ją perspektywie tomistycznej. Ocenę przeprowadzono w oparciu o nauczanie św. Tomasza z Akwinu w ujęciu polskiego dominikanina o. Jacka Woronieckiego, byłego rektora Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego i profesora teologii moralnej w Collegium Angelicum. Podjęta analiza składa się z czterech części. Pierwsza część omawia transhumanistyczną propozycję stosowania środków farmakologicznych do wzmacniania uczucia miłości. Część druga przedstawia analizę problemu wzmacniania ludzkiej miłości z perspektywy tomizmu. W trzeciej części na pierwszy plan wysuwają się tomistyczne pytania o celowość wykorzystywania farmakologicznych środków w kontekście transhumanizmu. W ostatniej części, na potrzeby oceny transhumanistycznej propozycji wzmacniania uczuć, transhumanistyczna metoda wzmacniania biochemicznego jest porównywana z tomistyczną metodą kształtowania ludzkich emocji. Jednocześnie zbadano, które podejście jest korzystniejsze dla regulacji ludzkiego dobrostanu i integralności etycznej. Badanie ma na celu ustalenie, czy metody transhumanistyczne są zgodne z ludzkim dobrostanem i zasadami etycznymi, czy też podejście tomistyczne zapewnia bardziej satysfakcjonującą ścieżkę do autentycznego szczęścia.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** miłość, emocje, proces decyzyjny, transhumanizm, doskonalenie człowieka, relacje międzyludzkie, św. Tomasz z Akwinu, tomizm, Jacek Woroniecki

## Introduction

New technologies such as smartphones, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence have a significant impact on how people experience their feelings. These technologies are gaining more and more information about human sensibility and are obtaining increasing abilities to influence it. Joy or sadness, love or hatred, aggression or calm may soon be controllable by technology. They might be entirely subjected to the control of reason. Once rationalized, they might cease to be the uncertain factor in human decision-making processes. Such a vision of the future raises the question: Are feelings a hindrance in making the right decisions? Are they a burden for humans, or rather an integral element that ensures that a decision-making person acts humanely? Where is the ethical-moral boundary of influencing human decisions by controlling human feelings using modern technological solutions?

This article will present the transhumanist proposal for enhancing human morality in the area of experiencing love, which includes both the ability to build lasting emotional relationships with another person and the ability to make decisions that lead to the well-being of individuals entering into close and long-term relationships. One of the sources used to introduce the proposed solutions will be the article by Julian Savulescu and Anders Sandberg titled

“Neuroenhancement of Love and Marriage – The Chemicals Between Us.”<sup>1</sup> The transhumanist proposal for improving the human decision-making process will be contrasted with the Thomistic perspective on the virtue of love and the associated decision-making, which guides a person toward their own good and happiness. The primary material used to present the Thomistic vision and assess the transhumanist position will be Jacek Woroniecki’s work *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*.<sup>2</sup>

## Transhumanist proposal of using the “love drugs”

Transhumanism is “the belief in overcoming human limitations through reason, science, and technology.”<sup>3</sup> One significant aspect of transhumanist philosophy is moral enhancement.

Some bioethicists reject the possibility of moral enhancement, while others advocate jacking up emotive empathy with the cuddle hormone oxytocin or improving moral cognition through cognitive enhancement. The bioethicists and transhumanists contemplating and promoting technologies of radical personality engineering need to grapple with the virtue traditions [...].<sup>4</sup>

Transhumanists, as philosophers of the future, foresee various applications of the achievements of contemporary empirical sciences.<sup>5</sup> They also investigate the ethical possibilities of implementing some of them. They wonder whether it will be possible to use them on a large scale and whether they will bring real benefits to humans.

<sup>1</sup> Julian Savulescu and Anders Sandberg, “Neuroenhancement of Love and Marriage: The Chemicals Between Us,” *Neuroethics* 1, no. 1 (2008), 31–44, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12152-007-9002-4>.

<sup>2</sup> Jacek Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 2000); Jacek Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, 2nd ed., vol. 2.1 (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Simon Young, *Designer Evolution: A Transhumanist Manifesto* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2006), loc. 88.

<sup>4</sup> James Hughes, “Unitarian Universalists as Critical Transhumanists,” in *Religious Transhumanism and Its Critics*, ed. Arvin M. Gouw, Brian Patrick Green, and Ted Peters (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022), 87–100.

<sup>5</sup> Stjepan Štivić, “What Cyborgization of the Human Body Brings: Conceptual Analysis, Distinctions, and Clarifications,” in *Transhumanism as a Challenge for Ethics and Religion*, ed. Robert Petkovšek and Bojan Žalec (Zürich: LIT, 2021), 87–94.

One of the proposals analyzed by Julian Savulescu and Anders Sandberg is the neuroenhancement of love. "Love is one of the fundamental aspects of human existence. It is to a large part biologically determined. We should use our growing knowledge of the neuroscience of love to enhance the quality of love by biological manipulation."<sup>6</sup> The problem of human relationship breakdowns, often related to the inability to control love, increasingly affects many people. It is painful. It causes, in many cases, human life to be deprived of happiness. Transhumanists argue that artificially manipulating the feeling of love could be a way to improve human decision-making, particularly when it comes to choosing life partners.<sup>7</sup> "In the near future, as our understanding of the neuroscience of love grows, there will be more opportunities to modify lust, attraction, and attachment."<sup>8</sup> Perhaps, as Savulescu and Sandberg hope, it will be possible to create "love drugs" that will help people choose the right life partners and maintain long, happy relationships with them. But such a pill could also influence overall human behavior, reducing aggression while increasing empathy. As transhumanists propose, everyone has the right and should have the right to freely manage themselves, including their emotional aspect. In the Transhumanist Declaration (2012), they write that they "favor morphological freedom – the right to modify and enhance one's body, cognition, and emotions."<sup>9</sup>

"Love drugs" would be a modern, scientific form of the age-old belief that humans can influence their behavior not only through free will, but also through external factors. These factors might even transcend the material world, touching upon the spiritual realm.

We used dances and chants, sweat lodges and fasts, fermented berries and bitter mushrooms, all to scramble our routine habits of perception and open a door to transcendence. Since the invention of symbolic culture, we have been praying, making offerings, and conducting magical rituals in search of healing, eternal youth, transcendent knowledge, and the powers of flight and transformation.

<sup>6</sup> Savulescu and Sandberg, "Neuroenhancement of Love and Marriage: The Chemicals Between Us," 42.

<sup>7</sup> Nick Bostrom, "In Defence of Posthuman Dignity," *Bioethics* 19, no. 3 (2005), 202–14, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8519.2005.00437.x>.

<sup>8</sup> Savulescu and Sandberg, "Neuroenhancement of Love and Marriage: The Chemicals Between Us," 37.

<sup>9</sup> Max More and Natasha Vita-More, eds., *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 55, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118555927>.

The oldest surviving written text, the Gilgamesh saga from ancient Sumeria, is about a man searching for a way to stay young forever. Our religious traditions are full of visions of better worlds to come, sometimes heavens, and sometimes a better world here, a New Zion where people are perfected, ennobled, long-lived, and blessed.<sup>10</sup>

In the case of transhumanists, the belief in the possibility of influencing one's behavior in ways other than through acts of will is combined with modern technological development. Transhumanists are convinced that it is not elixirs or spells that will make humans happy, but rather technology, which today we can calmly call nanotechnology.<sup>11</sup> It may become the means to achieve what is within the realm of our dreams. Robert A. Freitas Jr., Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Molecular Manufacturing in Palo Alto, California, is convinced that "even if for some reason nearer-term efforts fail to accomplish similar objectives using biotechnology alone, nanotechnology – via nanomedicine – is almost guaranteed to achieve the desired results."<sup>12</sup> However, this does not change the fact that transhumanists should confront their achievements with the tradition of shaping human personality through virtues.<sup>13</sup>

Proposals such as the one outlined above raise many questions and controversies, which are noted by the transhumanists themselves. It is necessary to assess risk of addiction to such substances. How to behave in case of an attachment to the wrong person? Can artificially enhanced love still be called love? Would taking a love drug be a kind of coercion? Is the biological modification of people the best way to improve their interpersonal relationships? However, as noted by the authors of the article "Neuroenhancement of Love and Marriage – The Chemicals Between Us," the most significant doubt expressed by the opponents of these types of enhancements is the argument that they are a deception that makes life meaningless. What makes life meaningful is the sense of fulfillment. If we eliminate the possibility of unfulfillment from human life, we might make human life unreal. If you cannot feel sadness, you have never really loved. When we remove the probability of unfulfillment from human life, we put it in a dead-end situation without the alternative. One could probably risk saying that we would then take away a person's freedom of choice. Savulescu and

<sup>10</sup> Hughes, "Unitarian Universalists as Critical Transhumanists," 5.

<sup>11</sup> Artur Andrzejuk, "Personalizm tomistyczny wobec nowoczesnej i ponowoczesnej antropologii," *Studia Theologica Varsaviensia* 55, no. 1 (2018), 31, <https://doi.org/10.21697/stv.2017.55.1.01>.

<sup>12</sup> Young, *Designer Evolution: A Transhumanist Manifesto*, loc. 66.

<sup>13</sup> Hughes, "Unitarian Universalists as Critical Transhumanists," 23.

Sandberg dismiss these key concerns by arguing that we live in a probabilistic world, the effects of which ensure that neuroenhancement will never eliminate difficulties or guarantee success in a relationship. In other words, we will never reach such a level that we eliminate the possibility of failure in love.

It is worth considering the theoretical possibilities of using the “love drugs”. Even if they cannot offer the desired results, a feeling of happiness, in every case, this transhumanist proposal aspires to artificially influence human decisions. “Transhumanists have a strong interest in alternative means for improving our decision-making processes.”<sup>14</sup> The method behind this influence is to technologically take control of human sentimentality and enhance it. Such action becomes then a moral action, and it is necessary to reflect on whether it is permissible, and if so, under what conditions. “The human brain did not evolve to make complex decisions. The challenges of early human life did not equip us for the choices of modern, technological life. We learned to use cognitive shortcuts. These worked well most of the time in simple environments but often fail us in more nuance.”<sup>15</sup> The decision-making process involved in building relationships is highly complex. This complexity arises not only because it pertains to the full richness of another human being, but also because, in addition to rational elements – which are, to some extent, predictable and calculable – it also involves the emotional sphere, which by its nature escapes rationality and, in a way, transcends it. Transhumanists, by proposing the enhancement of human love, aim to influence the decision-making process related to health and human life, alongside technological development. In doing so, they seek to facilitate access to, and the adoption and study of, technologies such as “love drugs”, either for themselves or for people in general.

Until now, humanity has often relied on the Precautionary Principle when making decisions. While the concept has historical roots, it was formally articulated in various international agreements, including the 1998 Wingspread Statement.<sup>16</sup> It is based on the belief that the regulations in place up to that point, which were based on risk assessment, proved ineffective. “Existing environmental regulations and other decisions, particularly those based on risk assessment, have failed to adequately protect human health.”<sup>17</sup> However, Max More believes that the “Precautionary Principle” is of little use for development

<sup>14</sup> More and Vita-More, *The Transhumanist Reader*, 241.

<sup>15</sup> More and Vita-More, 259.

<sup>16</sup> Wingspread Conference on the Precautionary Principle. “Wingspread Statement on the Precautionary Principle.” *Global Development Research Center*, January 25, 1998. Accessed August 24, 2024. <https://www.gdrc.org/u-gov/precaution-3.html>.

<sup>17</sup> More and Vita-More, *The Transhumanist Reader*, 260.

in the transhumanist sense. He argues that this principle only focuses on and takes into account difficulties. More advocates for a new principle that is more comprehensive and defends the scientific and technological pursuit of progress. The previous principle significantly limited the possibilities for development. The new principle is intended to lead humanity onto new paths of progress. He calls this new principle the “Proactionary Principle.” He encourages people not to fear the change it proposes because, as he argues, “stopping progress to eliminate risk is itself risky.”<sup>18</sup>

The new principle of progress proposed by More can take different forms. One of its forms is as follows: “Encourage innovation that is bold and proactive; manage innovation for maximum human benefit; think about innovation comprehensively, objectively, and with balance.”<sup>19</sup> For More, the wording is not the most important aspect, but rather the content it conveys. This content can be summarized in five key points: 1) Be Objective and Comprehensive, 2) Prioritize Natural and Human Risks, 3) Embrace Diverse Input, 4) Make Response and Restitution Proportionate, 5) Revisit and Revise.

The first point emphasizes that decisions should be made based not on emotional predictions, but on objective scientific data. “This means evaluating risks and generating alternatives and forecasts according to available science, not emotionally shaped perceptions, using the most well-validated and effective methods available.”<sup>20</sup> The second point highlights that technological development should be treated on a par with human and natural environmental development. Just as we care about the development of ecosystems, we should equally care about the development of technology. The third point warns that banning certain technologies or solutions is not effective, as such bans are often not enforced. Therefore, it is better not to impose them. However, to reduce the negative impacts of risky solutions, detailed guidelines for their use should be provided. “A drug that causes birth defects may be tremendously beneficial in people who aren’t pregnant women.”<sup>21</sup> Restrictions should only be introduced when there is a significant risk of serious harm. The fourth point is particularly important: limitations must be proportional and minimal, but effective. The fifth point encourages focusing on monitoring the outcomes of decisions and actions taken. Based on the results, specific elements of the project should be improved. More asserts that acting in accordance with the proposed principle

<sup>18</sup> More and Vita-More, 264.

<sup>19</sup> More and Vita-More, 265.

<sup>20</sup> More and Vita-More, 265.

<sup>21</sup> More and Vita-More, 266.

will ensure the preservation of progress. "As transhumanists, we will face decisions about using new technologies for ourselves, whether to recommend them to friends and family, and whether and in what context to advocate for them. At all these levels, the Proactionary Principle can provide guidance while protecting the imperative to progress."<sup>22</sup>

In summary, the Proactionary Principle promotes an approach that does not reject traditional choices of life partners but encourages enriching them through the conscious and responsible use of new technologies that can support and enhance human relationships. At the same time, it is an invitation to use technology to improve our human decisions. This approach is based on a different philosophy of using new technologies than the one that has been used so far, known as the Precautionary Principle.

The perspective that will be used to evaluate the transhumanist proposal in this presentation will be ethics derived from the philosophy of Thomism. This is, after all, one of the most widespread and time-tested ethical systems. At the outset, it should be said that in Thomism, love is not just a sensory feeling, being a movement of the body, but love also has a spiritual dimension.<sup>23</sup> According to such an understanding of love, it belongs to the sphere of human morality, and loving is a specific, human moral action. Transhumanism seems not to take this distinction into account, as will be shown later.

## The Thomistic proposal for analyzing the problem of enhancing human love

As noted by Jacek Woroniecki in *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, to properly assess human moral behavior, one must first clearly answer three questions: does human existence have the last end? what is the end of human existence? what is the basic relationship of man to this end?<sup>24</sup> It seems that a specific comparison and analysis of the answers given by transhumanists and philosophers of the Thomistic school to the above questions may prove fruitful in evaluating the ethical and moral possibilities of influencing human decisions by enhancing human feelings, especially love.

<sup>22</sup> More and Vita-More, 267.

<sup>23</sup> Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, vol. 2.1, 196–206.

<sup>24</sup> Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, vol. 1, 61–62.



The term “end” refers to the outcome of a specific process, which gives direction to that process.<sup>25</sup> The philosophy of the Thomistic tradition clearly states that there is an end in human existence. This can be seen when examining the reality that surrounds us. Teleology also exists in human life, but it has a distinct characteristic. “Indeed, man is the only being in the world capable of recognizing an end he strives for and consciously directing his actions towards it.”<sup>26</sup>

Transhumanists recognize the end in human existence and action when considering the need to overcome evolutionary development. Until now, they argue, human existence has been subject to the laws of evolution, which essentially proceed spontaneously, without a specific end. Human development has reached a stalemate. However, as the human species, we have now reached such a level of development, especially technological, that we can take the initiative to develop the *homo sapiens* species. We can give this development a direction determined by ourselves and aiming for an end defined by us. More, in the “Letter to Mother Nature,” writes that “we have reached our childhood’s end. We have decided that it is time to amend the human constitution.”<sup>27</sup> The end of human enhancement would be a state characterized by “eliminating diseases and defects, stopping the aging process, extending life indefinitely, and increasing intellectual and psychological capabilities.”<sup>28</sup> It seems that in the transhumanist understanding, humans do not have an ontological end. However, they do have a moral end. In summary, both streams agree that humans have a specific end in their lives. However, this end is understood differently.

The Thomistic philosophy, when asked about the end of human existence, responds that it is the infinite good, otherwise called God. This is the ultimate end towards which human existence aims. It is an objective end, that is, one that lies outside the human. Achieving this end is synonymous with achieving another significant end of human existence, which we could call the subjective end, and which is human happiness. In Thomistic philosophy, these two ends determine human existence.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Woroniecki, 62.

<sup>26</sup> Woroniecki, 63.

<sup>27</sup> Max More, “A Letter to Mother Nature: Amendments to the Human Constitution,” 1999, accessed October 18, 2023, <https://strategicphilosophy.blogspot.com/2009/05/its-about-ten-years-since-i-wrote.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Jerzy Kopania and Maria Nowacka, “Od unieśmiertelniania człowieka do śmierci cywilizacji,” in *Ulepszanie człowieka: Perspektywa filozoficzna*, ed. Grzegorz Hołub and Piotr Duchliński (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Ignatianum, 2018), 39.

<sup>29</sup> Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, vol. 1, 71–82.

The understanding of the purpose of human existence as union with God, the ultimate principle, and the achievement of personal happiness within the context of ethics is characteristic of Catholic moral theology, which is distinguished by its universalism.<sup>30</sup> As such, it integrates two different ethical concepts: deontological and hedonistic. In deontology, the moral value of an act is not judged based on its consequences but on the very nature of the act and the moral dignity of the subject performing it. This approach assumes that certain actions are morally obligatory, regardless of their consequences. The paramount duty is to fulfill the moral will, derived from principles or imperatives. An example of this is Kantianism with its categorical imperative. Immanuel Kant “came to the conclusion that the fulfillment of duty should be based on the categorical imperative of reason itself and entirely independent of the desire for happiness; he even went so far as to see in the very concept of duty a compulsion to something unpleasant.”<sup>31</sup> Hedonism, on the other hand, assesses the morality of an act based on its outcomes. The most well-known example is utilitarianism, which considers morally right whatever maximizes happiness or good. In this case, the key factor is the outcomes of an action, rather than the duty derived from the internal principles of the acting subject. An example is the thought of Jeremy Bentham, one of the authors of the concept of utilitarianism, who states that “by utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness (all this in the present case boils down to the same thing), or (what boils down to the same thing as well) to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered. If that party be the community in general, then the happiness of the community; if a particular individual, then the happiness of that individual.”<sup>32</sup> Utilitarianism is a form of consequentialist ethics that focuses on the outcomes of actions.

To properly evaluate moral behavior, one must carefully examine it. The decision-making process according to St Thomas Aquinas is described as a rather complex mechanism involving the cooperation of intellect and will, supported by virtues and influenced by emotions. All these elements affect the quality of the actions taken. “Intellectual knowledge and decisions of the will are deeply connected with imagination and emotions.”<sup>33</sup> Artur Andrzejuk, an expert in

<sup>30</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Elementarz etyczny* (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 2018).

<sup>31</sup> Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, vol. 1, 85.

<sup>32</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *Wprowadzenie do zasad moralności i prawodawstwa*, trans. Bogdan Nawroczyński (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1958), 18–21.

<sup>33</sup> Mieczysław Gogacz, “Przedmowa,” in *Uczucia i sprawności: Związek uczuć i sprawności w Summa Theologiae św. Tomasza z Akwinu*, Artur Andrzejuk (Warszawa: NAVO, 2006), 9–10.

philosophy, particularly in the thought of St Thomas Aquinas, presents the relationship between reason, will, and knowledge as an orderly scheme.

The process begins with a concept that serves as the preparation for a decision. At this stage, reason, or human intellect, identifies the object of the decision. This identification results from the capacity for knowledge. Next, the action of *synderesis* (the natural disposition of the practical intellect) takes place, which involves the acceptance – either an inclination toward or rejection by the will – of the object of the concept. “Inclination is often discussed by St Thomas as the so-called first movement of desire, for which a person is not responsible when it occurs solely within the sensory faculties. This first movement, inclination, has the nature of love – *amor*. It can occur both in the sensory desire and in the will. However, it always has the nature of fundamental goodwill, referred to by the Latin word *complacentia*.”<sup>34</sup>

The preparation for a decision concludes with the formation or lack of intent to act. At this stage, reason – the intellect – defines the object of the decision as a goal to be achieved. The will engages by accepting the concept as something worth pursuing. Emotions, meanwhile, can either support or hinder the formation of this intent, requiring the virtue of temperance to appropriately manage and distance them.

The next stage involves deliberation and the selection of means to achieve the intended goal. The intellect engages in reflection on all possible means to realize the intent. The virtue that is essential here is prudence, which enables the proper consideration of all the “pros” and “cons”. The will then selects the most appropriate means to achieve the goal, which also requires the virtue of prudence in relation to the will.

The final, though not the last, element of decision-making is the execution of the decision. The intellect oversees the implementation of the plan. The will executes the command, activating the previously prepared course of action. The desired virtue at this stage is wisdom, which helps to make the final decision and initiate action.

The last element of decision-making should be the evaluation of the decision made and executed. The intellect should judge all the steps of the decision-making process, assessing their correctness, effectiveness, and moral righteousness. The will, at this stage, experiences satisfaction or sorrow depending on the outcome of the decision. The virtue of temperance allows for maintaining the proper balance in experiencing pleasure or sorrow.

<sup>34</sup> Artur Andrzejuk, “Funkcjonowanie uczuć i sprawności w podejmowaniu decyzji,” *Studia Philosophiae Christianae* 33, no. 1 (1997), 120.

It is important to note in our considerations that, according to St Thomas Aquinas, emotions accompany both the beginning and the end of the decision-making process. During the stage of decision preparation, these emotions manifest themselves as love or aversion, and during the stage of evaluating the consequences, they appear as joy or sorrow. Joy is the emotion that accompanies a good decision – one that brings a person closer to their ultimate end. As Woroniecki explains,

All our actions, aimed at specific, temporal, and finite goals, are always subject to our choice, and the general goal that drives us to make this choice is the desire for our well-being – the pursuit of complete, perfect happiness. This ultimate goal is not subject to choice, as it is a necessary and deepest inclination of our nature, which no one can renounce. In the process that concerns us here, the goal is something already given or chosen, and now it is about finding and choosing the means that best suit us under the circumstances in which we find ourselves. This task is to be carried out by reason, and it should be trained to match means to the goal properly, to learn to maintain balance, or temperance, in everything we do.<sup>35</sup>

Joy, therefore, is the emotion that expresses happiness, which is the ultimate end and desire of every human being.

Transhumanism recognizes the state of happiness as the purpose of human existence, which it associates with longevity devoid of suffering. In this doctrine, it is perceived that humans inherently desire eternal life and want their life to be happy. Therefore, there should be an effort to eliminate everything that makes a human feel unhappy. Mortality is the primary cause of this. Further, there is a need to enhance the ability to build lasting interpersonal relationships: “[a] happy pair bond being one of the most important determinants of happiness.”<sup>36</sup> They see an improvement in the ability to create such relationships through the neuroenhancement of human love. “There are several strong arguments in favour of the biological enhancement of love.”<sup>37</sup> It is worth noting that both approaches agree on the purpose of human existence being the achievement of happiness. However, a crucial difference lies in the source of this happiness. In Thomistic philosophy, happiness is derived from the

<sup>35</sup> Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, vol. 2.1, 21.

<sup>36</sup> Savulescu and Sandberg, “Neuroenhancement of Love and Marriage: The Chemicals Between Us,” 34.

<sup>37</sup> Savulescu and Sandberg, 37.

highest good. In contrast, transhumanism attributes the source of happiness to the power of the human mind, leading to the technological enhancement of various aspects of human life.

The philosophy of Thomism defines a human's relationship to his end by answering the question: "What should be the primary motive for moral behavior: happiness or duty?"<sup>38</sup> Hedonism, which is closely related to utilitarianism, is a philosophy that assigns priority to happiness in assessing what is good and valuable. An example of a moral law formulated in this doctrine could be: "Act in such a way as to maximize general pleasure and minimize general suffering." Deontology assigns priority to duty in assessing what is good and valuable. An example of a moral law formulated in this doctrine might be: "Always tell the truth," where truthfulness is an intrinsic value, regardless of the consequences of lying in a given situation. Deontology leads to excluding happiness as an essential element in evaluating the moral value of an act. Righteous behavior is only when a person acts according to duty. It does not allow any action that follows from the desire for happiness. Deontology makes a person, as Woroniecki would say, a "disinterested sage."<sup>39</sup> According to Thomism, neither happiness nor duty can become the sole motivation for human action. Happiness and duty must be harmonized in human moral behavior. Both elements should make the basis for evaluating human morality simultaneously. At the same time, Thomism states that duty should be given precedence. It should be understood as a commitment to strive for the highest good, i.e., God, who blesses man with happiness. Here, happiness becomes a natural consequence of fulfilling one's duty.<sup>40</sup>

In the case of the transhumanist proposition, it is not entirely clear by which criterion the moral behavior is assessed. The goal is to achieve happiness. This has already been established. However, it seems uncertain whether a person achieves this goal out of duty or the desire for happiness. What is the foundation of moral law for transhumanists: happiness or duty? They argue that happiness is inaccessible to humans in their current state of existence. A person must undergo an enhancement process, starting with moral improvement and culminating in physical and biological enhancement. The actual impossibility of achieving happiness in the current phase of human development means that actions result from duty. "We must also consider our moral responsibilities

<sup>38</sup> Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, vol. 1, 83.

<sup>39</sup> Woroniecki, 84.

<sup>40</sup> Woroniecki, 83–96.

towards generations that will exist in the future.”<sup>41</sup> There is no other option but to pursue happiness as a duty. It should also be noted, however, that in transhumanism, the pursuit of happiness plays such a significant role that it becomes an end in itself. Transhumanists seem to overlook certain categorical limitations that Catholic moral theology, using the Thomistic philosophical system, recognizes and takes into account when guiding a person toward achieving happiness. One such limitation is human nature, which should be understood as the direct dependence of humans on God, the Creator. Here, the term “limitation” should be understood as an element that guarantees the dignity of the human person. Ultimately, it seems that in the transhumanist vision of the human relationship to its end, happiness can be achieved as a result of the enhancement process. In the Christian vision, the source of happiness is a relationship with God that is full of mutual trust and love.

In the context of the “love drugs”, achieving happiness for transhumanists occurs through fulfilling the human obligation to use all possible means to achieve this goal. They allow for a neurobiological enhancement of love because they do not associate it with human will. “[L]ove is not under voluntary control.”<sup>42</sup> They regard it as a feeling beyond the control of human will. We cannot force ourselves to love one person or another through our free will. We can, and even have a duty, to apply all available means to maintain lasting relationships with the people we love. “If there is a duty to be faithful to one’s partner, or a duty to do the best for one’s children (and so remain in a stable relationship), these could ground a duty to try to influence love through biological enhancement.”<sup>43</sup> The assertion that we have a duty to be faithful to chosen partners clearly indicates that the source of happiness, which is lasting human relationships, arises from duty. This duty justifies the use of the “love drugs”, or, more broadly, the neurobiological enhancement of human feelings. It seems that in the transhumanist proposal, there is a tension between the egocentric pursuit of happiness and the rigid, duty-bound obligation to promote development through technology, along with the compulsion to enhance humanity and human love. This tension can lead to a form of ethical paralysis.

<sup>41</sup> Baily, Doug et al. “The Transhumanist Declaration,” October 19, 2023. <https://www.humanityplus.org/the-transhumanist-declaration>.

<sup>42</sup> Savulescu and Sandberg, “Neuroenhancement of Love and Marriage: The Chemicals Between Us,” 38.

<sup>43</sup> Savulescu and Sandberg, 38.

## Thomistic questions about purpose in the context of the transhumanist “love drugs”

In the context of questions about the possibility of enhancing human decision-making processes, for example in the area of choosing life partners through the use of a “love drugs”, which is a neurobiological enhancement of feelings, it is necessary to primarily consider the third question and analyze the way of achieving the goal, which is happiness. Transhumanists, recognizing that human happiness is his goal, admit that one of its essential elements are lasting human relationships, which are built, among other things, with the help of love. They prove that humans have long been using chemical methods to strengthen love. They give the example of consuming alcohol to stimulate love feelings. These measures are intended to help strengthen human relations and reduce tensions in relationships.

Here arises a serious question. Is human moral action only evaluated with regard to its end, whether the action led to the end, or do the methods used to achieve this end also matter? In the Thomistic answer, both processes will be significant. Not only is it important to achieve the end, but also the path chosen to reach it. However, in transhumanism, the emphasis is on the outcome. In other words, the methods used to achieve the end are not so important, as long as they are effective. What is essential is to achieve it. This resonates with consequentialist ethics, of which utilitarianism is a part. Transhumanists argue for using the sphere of human feelings instrumentally. Given that we cannot control love with our will and it can be, as Savulescu and Sandberg write, like a race of a fat tall man with a skinny small woman with their legs tied together – a serious impediment to achieving happiness, we have the right to influence this love in any possible and most effective way for us.<sup>44</sup> Feelings as such are excluded from the moral sphere. Love is understood here as a sensory feeling, without anything spiritual about it, one that is subject to human reason and will control.

Woroniecki identifies three key perspectives on the role of feelings in human moral life: the hedonistic, stoic, and Christian approaches. The hedonistic view prioritizes feelings, suggesting that they should be the primary basis for moral judgments. In this view, emotions drive actions, with the ultimate end being the satisfaction of sensory desires – a concept prominently featured in the sentimentalism of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s philosophy. In stark contrast, stoicism advocates for the suppression of feelings, arguing that reason alone

<sup>44</sup> Savulescu and Sandberg, 41.

should govern moral behavior. This perspective was revived in modern times by Kant, who notably excluded the pursuit of happiness from moral considerations.<sup>45</sup> However, the Thomistic tradition, rooted in the philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas, contends that neither of these extremes is suitable. While feelings should not wholly dictate one's actions, they also cannot be entirely dismissed from moral life. As Irena Grochowska expresses, "In St Thomas's thought, love is the adherence of a being to the good. The good of each thing is its purpose, and the purpose of *caritas* love is a supernatural friendship with God, which means orientation toward the Highest Good."<sup>46</sup> This understanding of love goes beyond a mere emotion, aligning it with a greater moral and spiritual purpose. St Thomas uses various terms to explain what love is. He employs expressions such as: "orientation toward the good (*intentio*), from which the striving toward it, or desire, is born; the initial transformation of the power of desire by the object; adaptation; and most frequently, he uses the term 'delight in the good' (*complacentia boni*) to denote love as both a feeling and an act of the will."<sup>47</sup> In this Thomistic view, love is seen as a fundamental force that harmonizes both emotion and reason, guiding moral decisions in a way that neither fully rejects the importance of feelings, as in stoicism, nor elevates them above all else, as in hedonism. Instead, love in the Thomistic sense directs the individual toward the ultimate good – God – thereby integrating the emotional and rational aspects of human nature in the pursuit of true moral and spiritual fulfillment. "Relationships with others through love and friendship, fulfilling one's own personality through the acquisition of skills and virtues [...], and involvement in the development of communities from family to nation constitute the core of human activity that leads to happiness."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, vol. 1, 165.

<sup>46</sup> Irena Grochowska, "Miłość *caritas* i jej związek z mądrością według Świętego Tomasza z Akwinu," *Kwartalnik Naukowy Fides et Ratio*, no. 49 (2022), 1–12, <https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/2022-1Groch.pdf>.

<sup>47</sup> Stanisław Wierzbicki, "Uczucie miłości według św. Tomasza z Akwinu," *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 7, no. 4 (1960), 54.

<sup>48</sup> Andrzejuk, "Personalizm tomistyczny wobec nowoczesnej i ponowoczesnej antropologii," 37.



## Assessment of the transhumanist proposal for enhancing feelings using the example of the “love drug”

Treating love solely as a sensory feeling and placing it outside the sphere of human will makes it more of an impediment than a help in achieving human happiness. Due to the lack of direct means to manage love using reason or will, humans, according to transhumanists, should control this feeling through neuroenhancements. For example, as proposed by Savulescu and Sandberg, by using the “love drug.” When assessing the impact of feelings on human decisions, transhumanists give them a negative rating. Similarly, they view the entire human body, which, in their perspective, should be improved or even completely abandoned. “[W]e have certain streams of thought in which the biological body is derided as “meat” or “mere jelly”, something that ought to be discarded either in favor of something more physically robust, or perhaps even no body.”<sup>49</sup> Feelings, as a typically bodily power, are also subjected to a similar assessment as the entire human corporeality. Since feelings do not participate in human moral action because, in the transhumanist interpretation, they are not subject to will, one can and even should guide them so that they help more than hinder the achievement of happiness. One must master them and harness them to cooperate with humans. They should be enhanced using technology.

Transhumanists do not recognize the possibility of influencing human feelings in any way other than the “despotic” way, as St Thomas Aquinas described. For transhumanists, this is not only ethically permissible and good but even necessary, because it helps humans achieve their goal of happiness. If a person acquires the ability to effectively manage their feelings so that they become obedient to them, one should take advantage of such an opportunity.

The philosophy of the Thomistic tradition evaluates the role of feelings in human life differently. Above all, it considers feelings to be an integral and important part of human nature. “Christian ethics sees feelings as an essential component, but not the primary or foremost one, but secondary and as such subordinate to higher intellectual factors.”<sup>50</sup> Thomistic philosophy, like transhumanism, believes that feelings should be influenced by human reason. However, the way it wants to subordinate feelings to human reason is completely different. Unlike transhumanism, Thomistic philosophy assumes that

<sup>49</sup> Victoria Lorrimar, “Mind Uploading and Embodied Cognition: A Theological Response,” *Zygon* 54, no. 1 (2019), 193, <https://doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12481>.

<sup>50</sup> Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, vol. 1, 166.

man naturally has authority over his feelings. This authority is understood in a specific way. It is not a direct authority, which means that

the mind is to act with feelings not despotically, as with slaves, but politically, as with the free. [...] It should carefully educate them to learn to efficiently, willingly, without resistance, and even joyfully execute its commands [...]. The education of feelings aims to ensure the constant assistance of sensory factors to intellectual factors by enhancing them with virtues for regular cooperation with reason and will.<sup>51</sup>

By recognizing feelings as a sensory power rooted in the human body, they are considered an integral element of human nature. In contrast to transhumanism, which believes that the body and its powers are not an essential component of the human being. "Transhumanist perspectives on the human follow more closely a Platonic conception of the primary self as mind/spirit enclosed or imprisoned by a body."<sup>52</sup> Transhumanism adopts a position that denies understanding human nature as a combination of body and spirit. The body is a prison for the soul. In transhumanism, "there is no fundamental unity or integrity of the person or of the embodied human being; transhumanism does not recognize the values of integrity and unity (which are part of embodiment)."<sup>53</sup> Thomistic philosophy, by recognizing feelings as an integral element of human nature, grants them a significant role in the moral life of a person. The argument that feelings are subject to education suggests that Thomism understands the human being as a being in which "the body is not just an incidental addition, but a true collaborator of the soul."<sup>54</sup>

## Conclusions

The possibility of using the "love drugs", as well as other transhumanist enhancements of human feelings, stands in contradiction to the Thomistic conception of human nature. Even if both transhumanists and Thomists agree

<sup>51</sup> Woroniecki, 172–74.

<sup>52</sup> Steven John Kraftchick, "Bodies, Selves, and Human Identity: A Conversation Between Transhumanism and the Apostle Paul," *Theology Today* 72, no. 1 (2015), 61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040573614563530>.

<sup>53</sup> William Sweet, "Transhumanism and the Metaphysics of the Human Person," *Science et Esprit*, no. 3 (2015), 370.

<sup>54</sup> Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, vol. 1, 175.

on the need to improve or educate human feelings, the methods to achieve this goal are completely different. The transhumanist method – technological enhancement – seems to be in serious conflict with the Thomistic understanding of man as a unity of body and soul. On the other hand, the Thomistic method – educating human feelings – seems to be not sufficient or entirely ineffective from a transhumanist perspective. We are dealing with a similar goal, but different means to achieve it.

In conclusion, consider Woroniecki, who writes in *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza* that “a good end justifies indifferent means.” The end for both transhumanists and Thomists is good, but are the means also good or at least indifferent? Woroniecki further states that a good end can add a positive value even to dubious good deeds. He specifies that they must be supported by all circumstances, with particular emphasis on the circumstance “who acts.”

Owing to the transhumanist relinquishment of control over human feelings to technology, the circumstance of “who acts” becomes unfavorable, as it takes on an impersonal and inhuman form of exercising power over a person. This should lead to a negative assessment of transhumanist proposals for improving human feelings, including the possibility of using the “love drugs”. If the creator of technology is a human, then in the classical sense, they are responsible for the results of the application of a specific technology. However, for transhumanists, it is not the case. “Ethical constraints no longer matter because transhumanists want to create ethics from scratch [...]. Even when they are guided by good intentions, they are unable to fully understand the complexities of the methods they employ...”<sup>55</sup> The role of humans is limited to applying suitable technological solutions to themselves. In Thomism, the circumstance of “who acts” remains under the direct control of the human person, because the human person itself becomes this circumstance, and therefore it allows for the recognition of the ethical goodness and appropriateness of feelings education. The Thomistic ideal of education is not the artificial silencing of feelings, but their proper and conscious use and introduction to moral life.

Transhumanist manipulation of the feelings of love should not become a way to enhance human decision-making regarding life partners. The education of feelings, including love, should be fundamental in seeking the right life partner and in maintaining a relationship with them. Love should be one of the elements of a person’s free decision to be in a relationship with someone. For this to be the case, love cannot be artificially induced and enslaved by technology.

<sup>55</sup> Grzegorz Osiński, *Transhumanizm: Retiarius contra Secutor*, vol. 2 (Toruń: Wydawnictwo WSKIM, 2021), 332.

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