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„Our ethics has largely been formed in a prescientific era without any sophisticated scientific understanding on the human animal, its capabilities and its limitations."

Interview with Julian Săvulescu

RJAP: *On many occasions you confessed that you were impressed by Peter Singer's lectures. He is more an analytic philosopher than a continental one. So that means that you are attracted to this way of making philosophy.*

Julian Săvulescu: Yes. I went to Peter Singer's lectures in practical ethics when I was a medical student, because we could do an extra-subject, and I was very impressed with his ability to give arguments that were clear, understandable and logical. He started from ideas or premises that we accepted and moved to make progress on difficult issues. I remember in one of the first lectures when he also lectured to our medical course on abortion and infanticide. He said „If you accept abortion what is the difference between infanticide and abortion, the baby is inside the uterus in one case and outside the uterus, how this cannot make a difference to their right to life. This was very provocative for the medical students. He was the first person I have ever heard discussing ethical issues like poverty, euthanasia or abortion or animals in a kind of reasoned way rather than appealing to some set of rules or to authority. I was very interested in this way of thinking and I think it is the only way we can make progress because there is no point in appealing to people's emotions or intuitions by themselves. People have all sorts of emotions or of intuitions, they differ, so there is no way in which you can engage in a productive way.

RJAP: *You were attracted by the arguments and where the arguments lead you ?*

Julian Săvulescu: Peter has a very razor like mind, he is very able to develop the logical implications - it is a little bit like mathematics when you follow through his line of thought. And this seems to me to be the most promising way of making any progress. You mentioned continental philosophy, often continental philosophy is full of obscure language that only communicates with a small group of people. It is more like literature than mathematics or

reason. I do not think this is very helpful. It is interesting and colorful and it sounds nice and excites the human imagination but I do not think that it makes any great progress in solving the problems we face. You do not solve a mathematical problem by appealing to stories or literature. The one thing we share with all human beings is not a religion, it is not same emotions when we face some problem, but it is the capacity to reason. So, I think this is the only common currency in ethics. If we can make any progress across all human beings, it has to be through the exercise of reason, and logical argument, because that is the only thing we have in common. Our intuitions about the role of women in society or our emotions about abortion, everyone has different emotions about those, we have to use this common capacity.

RJAP: *Do we exaggerate if we say that moral philosophy is a necessary condition for progress?*

Julian Săvulescu: I do not know if progress is really possible, but I think the best candidate for progress is through a kind of analytic methodology and the use of a conceptual clarity, logical argument, coherent justifications of the values and principles.

RJAP: *What were the milestones of your career? You were attracted to philosophy thanks to Peter Singer. How do you see your career development, the milestones of your career in philosophy?*

Julian Săvulescu: One of the most important things was getting an academic publication, my first publication when I was doing my doctorate was a big achievement, because it taught me how to think, to write in the right way. I think that was a big achievement. I won a number of scholarships to go to Oxford and be able to study with Derek Parfit. At that same time I developed an interest in clinical ethics. The opportunity to go to Oxford as a postdoc was a big milestone. Another milestone was when I came back to Australia to set up my own program on ethics and genetics.

RJAP: *How did that happen?*

Julian Săvulescu: The guy who was the director of the Murdoch Institute (a genetics research institute) was a very good geneticist. His name is Bob Williamson. He was interested in ethics and also a very natural thinker and a polymath. He saw that I had this strong pedigree in medicine but I also studied philosophy at Oxford and he really chased me. Initially, I found it difficult and I didn't want to take the job, but eventually I did, because I asked for a very high position and they gave me this associate professorship, even though I was very junior. I came to appreciate him as a fantastic leader and a fantastic director and a fantastic intellectual, so it was a real privilege to work with him. I learned at that time to do public engagement, to talk to media, I also learned to work with scientists. That was a kind of

big learning curve, because I had to learn a lot of new skills besides philosophy. I had to learn about political involvement, about discussion with television, radio, the newspapers and also to build a team. So that was a sort of milestone and that really just because of him as an individual. I remember I said „I don't want to talk to the radio" and he said „You have to, that is a part of your job." That was good for him to make me do this. Then, my biggest achievement up to that time was to get a chair in practical ethics at the University of Oxford at the age of 37.

RJAP: *Pretty young.*

Julian Săvulescu: I was very young, but I was very lucky to have the support of very good people, like Derek Parfit and Jeff McMahan. It wasn't because I was some king genius, it's because I had a medical degree and a good training in philosophy and I had very good people supporting me. In all of these senior appointments, there it is a huge amount of luck. I was also lucky that we had very supportive Japanese donors and I have been able to build that relationship and increase this support to the Centre, which I established the year after I took up the chair. Overall, I think establishing the Oxford Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics was my biggest achievement. It is difficult to achieve a huge amount as an individual, but if you can build a group and a generation is easier. I learned that from Bob Williamson. He supported the careers of many scientists. Another major milestone was attracting really good young people to our program, like Guy Kahane, Thomas Douglas and Dominic Wilkinson. That has been a tremendous step forwards to have this next generation following of youth who are productive, achieving great things themselves. Without the Uehiro Foundation's support, that would not have been possible. To build that support has required not only good people and achievement, but trying to understand and appreciate the Japanese culture.

RJAP: *Would you say that your professional future is tied to the future of UEHIRO Centre?*

Julian Săvulescu: Yes. I hope to be able to retire in Oxford. But I think the role of the Centre is to take a leadership position in helping not just individuals in Oxford to do well, but to help the field progress globally. So I do a lot of things to support practical ethics in Australia as well and I hope to have some involvement here in Romania. I hope we could do more of that sort of things.

RJAP: *What would you say about an analytic way of doing philosophy when you are dealing with practical issues in the public debate? What was your experience? Do you think that arguments penetrate the public mind or public debate is noisier than the lectures you are giving?*

Julian Săvulescu: I think it is important not to exaggerate your own importance or impact. I do not think that I have a huge impact in changing public debate, but I do not think anyone particularly does. It is a very dynamic and complex process, but I do think that analytic philosophy can have some role and I think it has had some successes. For example, I think the arguments around euthanasia have been well-made and gradually these are having an effect and more and more countries and states in the U.S. are making this legal and eventually I think it will be legal nearly everywhere in the West. Organ transplantation and donation is a new area where I think that analytic thought has had an impact. So I think it has an impact. Peter Singer's books, for example, are widely read by my friends and family members that don't have any training in philosophy or even higher education qualification. I think it does have an effect, but it does not change the world, it does not solve the problems, the capacity to make a difference is relatively slow. For example in the debate around regulating doping in sport, I have been arguing for ten years that we need to rethink the current zero tolerance. There has not been a huge amount of progress made, but I think there are some changes and eventually I think that the way in which we view this will be revised. Analytic philosophy is not the panacea, is not a sort of cure for all problems, but it has an important contribution to make.

RJAP: *What about continental philosophy, which uses a lot of metaphorical language? On some particular issues it has a great impact, for example in France. It seems that appealing to somebody's emotions and narrations might be more appealing.*

Julian Săvulescu: Human beings have significant limitations or constraints. How those minds form views and attitudes, and what will change people's minds, are questions of neuroscience, psychology and social science. It appears true that often appealing to people's emotions or providing metaphors is more effective than providing a good argument in terms of changing their views. We should have a very broad church with a lot of different ways of doing philosophy and ways of promoting public debate. Analytic philosophy is the most effective at reasoned change, I believe, but I think it should be a significant part of a sort of healthy democratic deliberation, because it is about challenging people's arguments and assumptions and premises and concepts and values. It is not about brainwashing them or about simply changing their views by appealing to emotive language or through other devices. It should be something that we need to encourage and to promote. If we are to make progress, it needs to be on the basis of reason and not purely on emotion. Humans are emotional animals, so in order to effect change you need to harness that emotional energy. But just harnessing people's emotions can be extremely dangerous.

RJAP: *First, you were a medical doctor and then a philosopher. What kind of advantages gave you this double background? Did it bring you an advantage in analyzing practical issues in comparison with a person who is just a philosopher?*

Julian Săvulescu: I think having studied medicine and also science gives you a scientific way and a logical way of approaching problems and looking for solutions. So although the philosophical method is theoretical rather than empirical, the methodology is very similar. In some ways, the sort of approach I take is a scientific approach to morality, that is a kind of logical, reasoned approach based on certain values or certain normative truths or claims, but the actual structure of thinking about problems is very similar. Secondly, it makes you appreciate the value of science, but also its limitations, and thirdly, it gives you knowledge about the world. Many people do not realize exactly what is happening and what will be soon in the near future. They do not understand the way the world really is and the way human beings are or the way science is developing. Having a strong background in medicine enables you understand things like synthetic biology and their potential in a way that is difficult today, because the growth of knowledge is immense and complexity is increasing. So I think it is very beneficial in a number of ways, but I do not think it is necessary for doing good practical ethics. You know, Peter Singer, Jeff McMahan and other very good philosophers in this area do not have any background in science. I am very glad to have had this sort of training that I have had. It also enables you to understand what scientists and doctors and people from this tradition are thinking and how are they are concerned about. A lot of people in science have no respect for continental philosophy or these forms of philosophy where there is no clear argument and no clear conclusions and it speaks a language of its own. If you want to have an impact with scientists and those outside of philosophy, you need to be able to communicate and you need to be able to think in a way that engages with their way of thinking. I remember what a supervisor in my neuroscience degree said to me - he was really glad I was doing practical ethics because whenever he heard these people from philosophy that would say „on the one hand this, on the other hand that", while people in science want to be shown a line of thought, a direction and that is a very scientific way of viewing problems.

RJAP: *You had a piece of both science and philosophy. The scientist works with empirical experiments, the philosopher works with thought experiments. How would you see ethical methodology? Would you encourage using thought experiments or grounding our judgments on psychological findings?*

Julian Săvulescu: I think it is very important to recognize the value, but also the limits of science for moral decision-making. So, for example, we have an active program in Oxford looking in the science of morality and this can tell you why human beings make the moral decisions that they make, why they choose to kill, why they prepare to sacrifice some individuals for others, why they care about their family and friends more and what can change their behavior. These are all empirical questions but with a relevance for practical ethics. So in ethics and science, particularly cognitive science and biology are

very important in telling us about ourselves as moral creatures, but they cannot tell us what we should do, so there is this giant gap between the world of science and the laws of nature and the moral world of what we ought to do or what is right to do or what is good or bad. That is not answered purely by science, which is a distinctive area of human life, but is the province of ethics, of moral philosophy. When we are making decisions about what we ought to do or what is a value or what we should do, this is an area where philosophy can make a distinct contribution as opposed to anthropology or sociology or literature or science, because moral philosophy is about thinking and reflecting about those sorts of questions and making those sorts of decisions. The methodology it may use should be the same as the science, logical, analytic methodology, but the values which we start out with have a radical disconnection from the empirical world and the world of science. We should use thought experiments, we should use methods of science, but in order to address the question of values and principles and normative truths the subject matter is completely different. That is why philosophy is so exciting and important. That is why I left medicine to study it.

RJAP: *Do you consider the armchair reliable?*

Julian Săvulescu: It is not entirely reliable. But it is necessary. Philosophy is a reflective discipline. It is not an empirical science, because claims around value or normative truths are not answerable by purely empirical investigation. Science may be relevant, but normativity is a human armchair discourse and realm, but I think it denigrates it to in the eyes of non-philosophers, especially scientists, to say that is just an armchair activity. It is not something that you can do a test tube experiment on or apply the laws of physics to answer. When you decide either you stay home with your mother or fight in the Resistance science will not tell what the answer on that questions is, you have to make a decision, which is human decision, an ethical decision. That is a kind of armchair decision. All the most important human decisions in the history of the world have involved values and are ethical decisions. They are, if you like, armchair decisions, even when they were taken on the battlefield.

RJAP: *But you have this idea of thought experiments. That suggests that ethics is not only an armchair activity. Basically, you seem to be saying that thought experiments are actually normative experiments.*

Julian Săvulescu: Thought experiments are not only made to be testing various normative claims. They are kind of scientific method, but their subject matter is normative. Which way the thought experiment goes or how you should revise your intuitions is not something that science alone will answer, so, yes, it is an armchair activity. In a sense it would be better to say it is a theoretical activity, like mathematics. Ethics is more like mathematics. One of the first papers I wrote was called „Two worlds apart - religion and ethics". I

wrote that religion has nothing to do or very little to do with ethics, because it is about faith and ethics should be about reason. In that sense ethics was much closer to mathematics than it was to religion. We think we can make moral progress and if you have a belief in something irrespective of the evidence or reason, then that is not what I think progress should be. Many people confuse normativity with religion, the fact that you have to have a set of values that you cannot further justify is often considered to be faith. It is faith in one sense, because there is not a further empirical justification, but it is different in another sense and this is deeply important why ethics is closer to mathematics. It is because it is revisable. It should be open to revision and improvement, whereas once you have a religious dogma there is no possible progress and also there is no possibility of convergence between different religions. Ethics should be universal, revisable and improvable. The process of making moral progress is something that should be ongoing. What does Catholic Church tell us about synthetic biology? Who knows? It was never formed to deal with problems like that.

RJAP: *Therefore, ethics is not self-sufficient whereas religion is and ought to be self-sufficient?*

Julian Săvulescu: Religions have a very limited flexibility and capacity for evolution. Whereas ethics should be sufficient, the reason and the methodology of ethics should be self-sufficient, but the final output is never going to be fixed. Everything is changing, the world is changing, and we are changing. It is a dynamic process, not a static process like we would appeal to some authority or to some book to tell us the answer. That is why it is much closer to the processes of discovering mathematical truths. It is also very exciting. Today we have the biggest challenges that human beings have ever faced. We have enormous technological power, we live in a globalized world, so the risks that we face are unprecedented and the benefits are often greater than humans have ever had, but we have to make decisions. It is not clear what we ought to do and that is not a question that politicians can invent, it is not a question for an authority. We cannot ask God what we should do. We have to answer what we ought to do and that is a question of practical ethics.

RJAP*: How did you come to be a champion of human enhancement? What are its most fundamental philosophical implications?*

Julian Săvulescu: Just to take the second question, first I think it is about improving the human condition. There are many parts of our lives that do not contribute to us getting diseases, but profoundly affect the way in which we see the world or we relate to the world or relate to other people. Science is giving us now the capacity to change those capabilities. The common currency of ethics is human wellbeing. At least, ethics should be about improving people's wellbeing. Initially I started looking at diseases in medical ethics,

but disease is only one part of our life. There are so many other aspects. Now we have the capacity to improve those other elements and I think this is what ethics should be about. So the interesting questions are „what is wellbeing?", „what should be the limits on its pursuit?" This is where we need to do more work. I had to take up this job in a genetics research institute and I was able to understand what you can do with genetic selection and how you can influence, what kind of children are born, not just how healthy they are, but the abilities and gifts they have. This attracted me down the track of looking at the ways in which technology could enhance human beings. Then I gave a project to an American medical student to look at doping in sport and I was shocked how prevalent it was, how effective it was and how bad the regulations were. Over ten years ago I started writing on performance enhancement in sport. Then when I came to Oxford I became interested in cognitive enhancement and spent some time on writing on this, realizing how important that was. In one of the first papers I wrote on doping in sport I said that to be human is to be better or at least to try to be better. It is not just through meditation, discussion or education; it is also through using science to improve ourselves. I think it is a very interesting area in bioethics. I studied medicine originally to do psychiatry, to study the human mind and then I met psychiatric patients with schizophrenia and a saw the limitations of medical treatment at that time. My friend described ECT as like kicking the television when it does not work. I decided that this was not really either deeply human or deeply interesting in terms of the soul of science. It has improved now, but I switched my interests to philosophy.

RJAP: *When we think about the human condition we usually refer to a definite number of traits. The implication of what you are saying is that human condition is not something fixed.*

Julian Săvulescu: Of course not, we are always evolving, we are always changing ourselves. Humans have been modifying their bodies for religious reasons or for aesthetic reasons. We are always changing; we are changing animals by nature. Despite the fact that our biology and psychology are relatively stable, we are changing very much our social circumstances and our world. Michael Meaney studied baby rats deprived of maternal love. They had brain abnormalities. The brain does not develop normally, including the hippocampus and other areas of the brain. This is passed on to the next generation of rats through epigenetic changes. There are Romanian orphans who probably suffered in the same way. Whether rats are loved in childhood completely changes not just the behavior, but their biology, their nature. We have some dispositions, humanity has dispositions and individuals have dispositions, but they are not immutable and they vary from person to person. Another important part of this project on human enhancement is that people are not equal; there are people that are gifted, people who are not gifted, people with terrible diseases, and people in great health. Science gives

us the opportunity to change this. We should now ask, ethically, „is this distribution fair or desirable?" and if it is not how should we change it? I think it is the most interesting area of applied ethics.

RJAP: *It seems that your idea of human enhancement cuts even deeply, it is not only about fixed versus evolving human condition. It is about the fact that we have the possibility to do whatever we want with the human condition.*

Julian Săvulescu: I had this very interesting interview with Richard Dawkins at the time of Darwin anniversary. He was running a series programs on BBC and he was the interviewer. We talked for about an hour and half and at the end we both asked to BBC to have the whole uncut tape, because they were cutting at 20 minutes. It is really interesting to talk to somebody really smart, who understands the issues, who wants to make progress. We actually were making progress thinking about different issues, so we both wanted to have this tape, but they would not give it to us, I had this 20 minute edited version. One of the things I said there is that until this point we have been the result of natural evolution, but at this point we can create a rational evolution. We can make the choices about what kind of animals we are, what kind of children we have, what sorts of dispositions we have. I do believe in free will and I do believe in human reason and I think those two things combine meaning that we can shape or even radically redirect how we are. I think this is very exciting.

RJAP: *You did not receive the uncut tape, but now you can speak about this distinction between natural and rational evolution, which is very interesting.*

Julian Săvulescu: The other point is that we are devolving actually, because we are accumulating more and more mutations. It is not that at the moment human evolution is progressing or stopped, it is actually deteriorating. We even need to act to maintain the integrity of the human genes. You would have to do something through gene therapy. It is not as if we can avoid these choices, we have to make decisions - do we allow things to continue to go down, do we keep them at the status quo or do we improve them? I think this is the most important human area for academic work, because in a sense we are in a competition, a competition with nature and its forces, a competition with the machines that we create artificial intelligence. Maybe we are even in a universal competition with other life forms somewhere else. We have to make decisions about how the future goes in the long term. To leave such an important thing to chance or to nature it seems to me to be deeply mistaken.

RJAP: *You already know the classical objection that our freedom is at stake when we employ enhancement techniques. Is this criticism valid?*

Julian Săvulescu: The problem with every ethical decision is that there is no rule that fits every case, you cannot make a statement that enhancement is

unsafe or unnatural. I think there are universal ethical principles, but how they are instantiated, how they realize depends on the circumstances. I am a big defender of liberty and reproductive freedom, but there are circumstances where we should give up reproductive liberty. I once gave in a paper this example of Cyprus, where in the 1980's they had a huge problem with thalassemia, a genetic blood disorder. The church actually to its credit took action and said that in order to be married in a church you have to have a carrier test for thalassemia. They didn't say that you have to have an abortion; they just said „if you two want to be married, you have to know what each of you both carries and what the chances are to have a child with thalassemia". Everyone did that and then everyone chose after that point to have prenatal testing and to have an abortion. They radically cut the problem of thalassemia. They were spending something like 50% of the health budget on thalassemia or 100% of the blood supply, this was unsustainable. There was a loss of freedom; you had to have the test if you wanted to be married. In that circumstance it was a very good decision. In terms of freedom, yes, you can lose freedom and freedom may be threatened. It depends on the particular intervention and it depends on how it is deployed. For example, one way in which you can protect freedom is to have enhancements that your own free choice, you offer enhancements to people as an option compared to the status quo and that will not undermine freedom. Certain sorts of enhancements increase freedom, for instance enhancements that improve the ability to make decisions about delaying gratification. Some people lack that ability. If you have a chip in your brain that changes your desires and intentions in the way that you value and choose then that does enhances freedom, but it depends on what it is. In all of these cases people want a simple answer to practical ethics. They want something like as long as we respect human dignity everything will be all right. What is human dignity, what is particular case? This is some kind of childish, Ten Commandments approach to ethics. You cannot give people Ten Commandments to make the decisions for every situation in their lives, you have to evaluate every situation and make your own decisions. In this sense I have a kind of sympathy for the existentialists. You have to make a decision; you have to make it for yourself. I do not care what you decide or what you do, it is not my job to be missionary. My job is to provoke you to think about your choice better. I make the decision whether I live or die, I make the decision whether I have children or not or how I have children. Margaret Thatcher said there is no such thing as the state, there are only individuals. There is no doubt that we depend on other people for our self-esteem, a position, health, our life, but we are all individuals. I have some antipathy towards the US, but one thing that they got right is that we are individual people with individual choices and freedoms. You make the decision about whether you take this job or that job, whether you kill yourself or you do not. That is a very important ethical property about people.

RJAP: *Ethical problems are usually generated by human interactions. Is science creating a whole new set of ethical issues, unprecedented ones?*

Julian Săvulescu: I think it is. I read this Emile Zola's novel when I was young called *La Bête Humaine* which means *The Human Idiot*. It is about this train out of control. You might think that science is like this kind of train out of control. I think that actually we know much less than we think we know, we only know a tiny fraction. Science is creating problems that we do not realize and we are worried about things which are not really problems because we lack full knowledge. In general, people raise obstacles to things that are not really problems and they fail to raise obstacles to things that are really deep problems. The challenge is to work out what the real problems are. That gets harder and harder in science and complexity in human interactions gets richer and deeper. It is not as if we see that there are only five fish in the lake there, and if we fish those five, they will be all gone and we will be angry. That is a fairly simple problem. The problems that science creates are not just on a level of quantum interactions, they are at the level of radically changing the human relationship between themselves and the world. We do not really know what the biggest problems are. I think the biggest problems are the radically increasing artificial intelligence, the connectedness of the world, putting people together through the internet is not a good thing. People are enthusiastic about Facebook, Google, but that may change. We do not have a systematic science of these big issues. I had the privilege to meet Nick Bostrom when I first came to Oxford. We do different things, but I have an enormous respect for him because he is focused on the really big issues that confront humanity not now, but over the next 50 or 100 years. This is an understudied, under researched area.

RJAP: *The problem was not the violence in the world or that people fail to cooperate, but that when you put together scientific advancements and all these things like violence, lack of cooperation and you mix them up, then something explosive might appear.*

Julian Săvulescu: I am just reflecting on this from a very undeveloped perspective. Stephen Hawking said something like this: „It is a sick joke that the reason why we have not encountered intelligent life forms elsewhere in the universe is because when technology and civilization reaches a critical degree, that life form destroys itself." I think we have to take that possibility seriously. Many people are very complacent and happy, they look to the past, it is a sunny day today, the children are playing and they think that things will continue on like this. In the past there have been massive wars and human conflicts and there may be those sorts of conflicts again. I do not study this, I talk about roughly what we ought to do. We were talking about continental philosophy and analytic philosophy and I made this joke last night that the sort of philosophy I do is similar to continental philosophy, because

it really is a narrative, a story, a sketch of the possibility, a sort of an idea. If I was in charge of the European Union or whatever, I would devote 10% of the research budget to looking at these things really systematically and really deeply, preparing people to spend their lives hearing these sorts of questions, because they are much more important than many of the things that the European Union is spending money on. But few people are prepared to face hard questions or make large sacrifices. There should be this sort of Manhattan project of the future of humanity, but it should be on how to preserve it, not destroy it.

RJAP: *Many believe you are a consequentialist. Why do you consider this position appealing?*

Julian Săvulescu: I am Millian consequentialist, so I think two things are important: freedom or autonomy and wellbeing. The reason why I think that these are important is because what matters for each of us is how our lives go. Ethics should impartially consider the things that matter to each of us. Consequentialism is just a theory that says you should maximize those kinds of things that are of value, so in this case autonomy and wellbeing. It has a common currency that everyone can accept, whether you are a Buddhist or a Hindu or a Muslim or a Jew or a Christian. It seems to have a kind of plausible foundation in terms of things that matter to each of us. It is impartial. In fact I am a kind of minimal consequentialist because I do not think that you should necessarily maximize, but you should engage in small self-sacrifice for the sake of large benefits to other people. This is a kind of morality that is attractive, that gives people freedom and promotes small sacrifices for large benefits for others. We would all be better off in terms of rational self-interest as well. I think rationalism and versions of consequentialism can run nicely together.

RJAP: *On the other side, it seems that you do not favor the deontological approach. Why is that?*

Julian Săvulescu: Rule-consequentialism is kind of useful version of consequentialism for everyday life, because we need rules to simplify interactions and deal with complex situations. But we do not need rules that do not benefit people. People become obsessed about rules. A sophisticated ethics will look at when rules should be broken, when rules should be revised, how rules should evolve. For example, the current rule against using any form of enhancing performance in sport is now out of date and is very difficult to implement in the world modern doping. There are other good reasons to revise that rule. I think that ethics is really about reasons and working at how those reasons weigh against each other to determine what you are most reasoned to do. Rules are not absolute and should be derived from our reason and not the other way round. Reason should create our rules. I think it is a

kind of primitive morality that just sticks to a set of absolute, unrevisable, unchangeable rules that have to be obeyed at all costs. We should rather reflect upon the rules that we inherited through legal traditions and evolution and they should be revised as technology advances. It makes more progress possible. It is hard to see how moral progress is possible when you have a set of rules that came from God and are set in stone for all time.

RJAP: *How will the ethics of the future look like?*

Julian Săvulescu: Our ethics has largely been formed in a prescientific era without any sophisticated scientific understanding on the human animal, its capabilities and its limitations. It has been based essentially on a folk understanding of human psychology including the moral psychology. The ethics of the future will start with looking at human dispositions, psychology, character, limitation from a much more scientific perspective and will be an ethics for humans as they really are, not as they appear to be, not as we would want them to be, not as we ideally hope they are as being made in the image of God. Science cannot tell alone what we ought to do. An ethics of the future will also identify core areas of progressive common human morality that we come to agree upon and to shape how we create new institutions, new laws. For example, in the debate about doping in sport we need to agree on what the values will be that should govern the rules of the future for sport. I have argued that those values should be safety or protection of wellbeing, a degree of freedom, a striving towards perfection, spectator interest, preservation of human contribution, testing of intrinsic ability with a particular sport. Therefore, various values to inform what sorts of enhancements should be allowed or should not be allowed. The challenge is going to be to articulate a set of values for the future that, given the reality of technology and ourselves, can inform what sorts of rules or constraints we place on people. But one thing is certain – we cannot know now what the ethics of the future will be. It is our responsibility to set it on a path that will make it better than the ethics of today.

Interview by Emilian Mihailov