

## **US bioethicist to probe rising transhumanist movement at 2026 Plunkett Lecture**

One of the leading scholarly critics of the rising transhumanist movement will deliver this year's Plunkett Lecture live in Sydney.

Professor Jason T. Eberl from Saint Louis University will examine the ethical risks of transhumanism, a philosophical movement that embraces the use of biotechnology to enhance and evolve the human species into "posthumans".

Delivering the free Plunkett Lecture live in Darlinghurst, Professor Eberl will draw on his prolific research into transhumanism to ask if enhancing human beings is possible, desirable or even ethical.

Professor Eberl will use Thomas Aquinas' understanding of human nature and flourishing to critique the various forms of human enhancement that transhumanism advocates, including physical, cognitive, and moral enhancements.

"The transhumanist movement challenges us to reaffirm the fundamental shared nature of all human persons and an objective understanding of what it means for human persons to flourish," Professor Eberl said.

"While novel biotechnologies and AI are not, in themselves, something to fear, we must tread carefully in our moral assessment of how such technologies may impact human lives and well-being, both individually and collectively.

"Although classical thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas could not have envisioned the technological breakthroughs confronting us today, the perennial wisdom found in their philosophical and theological writings provide a rich set of metaphysical and ethical guidelines for evaluating the proper use of such technologies."

Professor Eberl is the Hubert Mäder Chair in Bioethics, Professor of Philosophy, and Director of the Albert Gnaegi Center for Bioethics at Saint Louis University in Missouri.

A self-confessed lover of sci-fi, Professor Eberl is known for addressing the ethical risks and potential benefits of human enhancement using pop culture references, including Star Trek cyborgs and the humanoids of Battlestar Galactica.

The modern movement is largely influenced by science fiction, and gaining strong support by tech oligarchs, particularly those investing in so-called artificial general intelligence (AGI).

Transhumanism has been a contentious ethical and philosophical issue for centuries, linked to the concepts of immortality, utopia and futurism.

Professor Eberl's Plunkett Lecture on 8 April follows the release of the Vatican's International Theological Commission's newest document, *Quo vadis, humanitas?* which responds to the anthropological consequences of the transhumanist and posthumanist movements.

Hosted by the Plunkett Centre for Ethics – a joint initiative of Australian Catholic University, St Vincent's Public Hospital Sydney, St Vincent's Private Hospital Sydney, the Mater Hospital Sydney, Calvary Healthcare Limited, Mercy Hospital in Melbourne and Cabrini Hospital in Melbourne – the annual lecture series welcomes world leaders to address growing concerns in healthcare ethics.

Plunkett Centre director Dr Xavier Symons said Professor Eberl's lecture was timely given recent developments in artificial intelligence and biotechnology.

"The human person is increasingly thought of as a limit that needs to be surpassed, particularly in light of recent developments in biotechnology and AI," Dr Symons said.

"This should concern all of us who are interested in human dignity and flourishing. But we also need to ask whether moderate forms of enhancement may be possible or desirable in principle, even if there are significant practical barriers to proceeding.

"By drawing on his significant expertise in the thought of St Thomas Aquinas, Professor Eberl will help us make the necessary distinction between enhancement in service of the human, and posthumanism.

Australian Catholic University has specialists who can comment on news matters relating to their area of expertise. Please direct requests to ACU's [Media Team](mailto:acu.edu.au/media-enquiries) at [acu.edu.au/media-enquiries](mailto:acu.edu.au/media-enquiries).

## MEDIA RELEASE

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“We are very grateful to have a philosopher of his calibre deliver this year’s Plunkett Lecture.”

### **2026 Plunkett Lecture: Enhancing Human Beings - Possible? Desirable? Ethical?**

**When:** 8 April 2026, 5pm for 5:30pm lecture start.

**Where:** L4 Function Room, St Vincent’s Clinic  
438 Victoria St, Darlinghurst NSW 2010

**Register for Free:** [bit.ly/2026PlunkettLecture](https://bit.ly/2026PlunkettLecture)

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