

**Essayist Paul Klotz: With the Enhanced Games, 'we are witnessing the return of the circus'
By pitting doped athletes against each other under medical supervision, the Enhanced Games,
funded by leading figures in American transhumanism, mark the beginning of a human
modification economy. Published on May 25, 2026, *Le Monde* In English**

Sunday, May 24, marks the launch in Las Vegas, Nevada, of the Enhanced Games, conceived by Australian entrepreneur Aron D'Souza. The premise is simple: Athletes are allowed to dope under medical supervision in order to break world records in their respective disciplines, with a prize of up to \$1 million (around €860,000) for each record broken.

The Enhanced Games aim to rival the Olympic Games and become a major fixture in international sport. To that end, they are funded by the pillars of American transhumanism – tech billionaires such as Peter Thiel, as well as figures close to the US administration, including Donald Trump Jr.

Steroids, testosterone, growth hormones: Over recent weeks, participants in this competition have ingested a host of substances, driven by the hope of reviving a stalled career or out of simple curiosity before retiring from sport.

That doping athletes to help them break records runs counter to the three Olympic values – excellence, friendship and respect – is almost too obvious to state. In this event, there is no excellence, since chemistry substitutes for personal achievement; no respect for the human body, the rules of sport or the opponents against whom these records will be set; and no friendship, since the very principle of these Games is discriminatory.

Yet the sporting question just gets to the surface of the problem. The Enhanced Games signal a return to a conception of the body that we thought had vanished with Ancient Rome: We are witnessing the return of the circus games. Like those of the gladiators who came before them, the bodies of these "enhanced" athletes serve a strictly functional logic. Stripped of their intrinsic value, they are now subject to two capricious masters: spectacle and money. They are living, breathing advertisements for their sponsors' appetites.

Ultimately, the founders of these Games intend to create a new market for medical and pharmacological protocols aimed at augmenting human physical capacities. They stand at the vanguard of the oncoming commercialization of biological capital. Maximilian Martin, their spokesperson, puts it in human terms, claiming that "Enhanced (...) is relevant for anyone: If you're a 25-year-old training for a marathon, or whether you're a 65-year-old, and you want to have more energy to take your grandkids to the playground and play with them." What he does not say is that these retired grandparents might also be forced to work an additional 10 years, as well.

A doubly deceptive freedom

The Games on May 24 cross a moral threshold. Until now, the market bought the body's output – its labor power; the Enhanced Games and the commercialization they herald make the organism itself – now rendered adjustable, modifiable – a source of value in its own right. This logic echoes that of slavery, where the body is the object of transactions and appropriation.

To this analysis, defenders of the Enhanced Games offer a single argument: individual freedom. Once "enhanced," individuals will see their abilities increase and their possibilities multiply. This freedom is doubly deceptive. On the one hand, it will harden into a constraint, since tomorrow, a company could hire only the most "doped" candidates; those most exposed, often confined to exhausting manual labor, will be forced to modify their bodies in order to find or to keep employment.

On the other hand, this "enhancement" project serves no virtuous end. It's not about improving the quality or longevity of human life. In seeking to eliminate the physiological constraints of human beings, it aims only to strip away, one by one, all the elements of sensory life that give existence its flavor and that continue to resist the demands of performance: fatigue, which requires us to sleep and to dream; pain, which forces us to stop and to be still; hunger, which brings people together around a table. These limits are not failures; they are the barriers that prevent the transformation of humanity into a purely productive force, dominated by a select few.

Yet none of this has been the subject of democratic deliberation. No assembly, no public debate has addressed the question of whether our societies consent to the establishment of a market for biological enhancement, nor under what conditions. The spectacle alone of May 24 functions as a trial run; what is presented today as a sporting event is, in reality, the launch of an economy of human modification.

This, fundamentally, is the project of the Enhanced Games' promoters: to make the individual entirely available and exploitable, and to make this prospect desirable through spectacle. After the exploitation of labor, attention and personal data, it is now the exploitation of the body itself that capitalism intends to generalize – and to celebrate. In doing so, the moral principles that structure our societies are being irreversibly dismantled. It falls to humanists to meet this challenge.