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# Which theory of disability does transhumanism presuppose ?

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## Abstract

The aim of this talk is to discuss from both a cultural and critical disability studies perspective the way people with disabilities are viewed in the emerging field of transhumanism. According to transhumanist scholars like Ray Kurzweil, director of engineering at Google, or Nick Bostrom, director of the Future of Humanity Institute at Oxford University, the NBIC convergence should give to human beings the possibility to experience in the near future a radically new human condition 2.0. The use of biotechnological means should indeed release human beings from natural death, diseases and disabilities which affect human species for more than 200 000 years. On the basis of a cultural disability analysis of popular and academic literature, films and media, I will first show how people with disabilities are depicted within the transhumanist culture. By relying on such cultural overview, I will then address the following issue from a critical disability studies perspective: why are life experiences of people with disabilities mostly viewed by transhumanists as experiences of human incompleteness and frustration which lead disabled people to transcend their condition by artificial means ? The assumption I will develop is the following: corporeal experiences of disabled persons are mostly interpreted by transhumanists from a "universalist" conception of disability, in a way that strengthens both moral and political purpose of the transhumanist move, that is, the normative justification of human enhancement and the right to overcome human nature. Finally, I will argue that such ideological use of disabled people's life depictions within the transhumanist culture is based on two presuppositions: the first one relies on the belief that prostheses, implants and assistive technologies necessarily enhance disabled people's quality of life. The second one states that humans are necessarily disabled with regard to transhumans. Actually, both presuppositions are questionable.

**Keywords:** Transhumanism / Disability theory / human enhancement / cultural disability studies

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