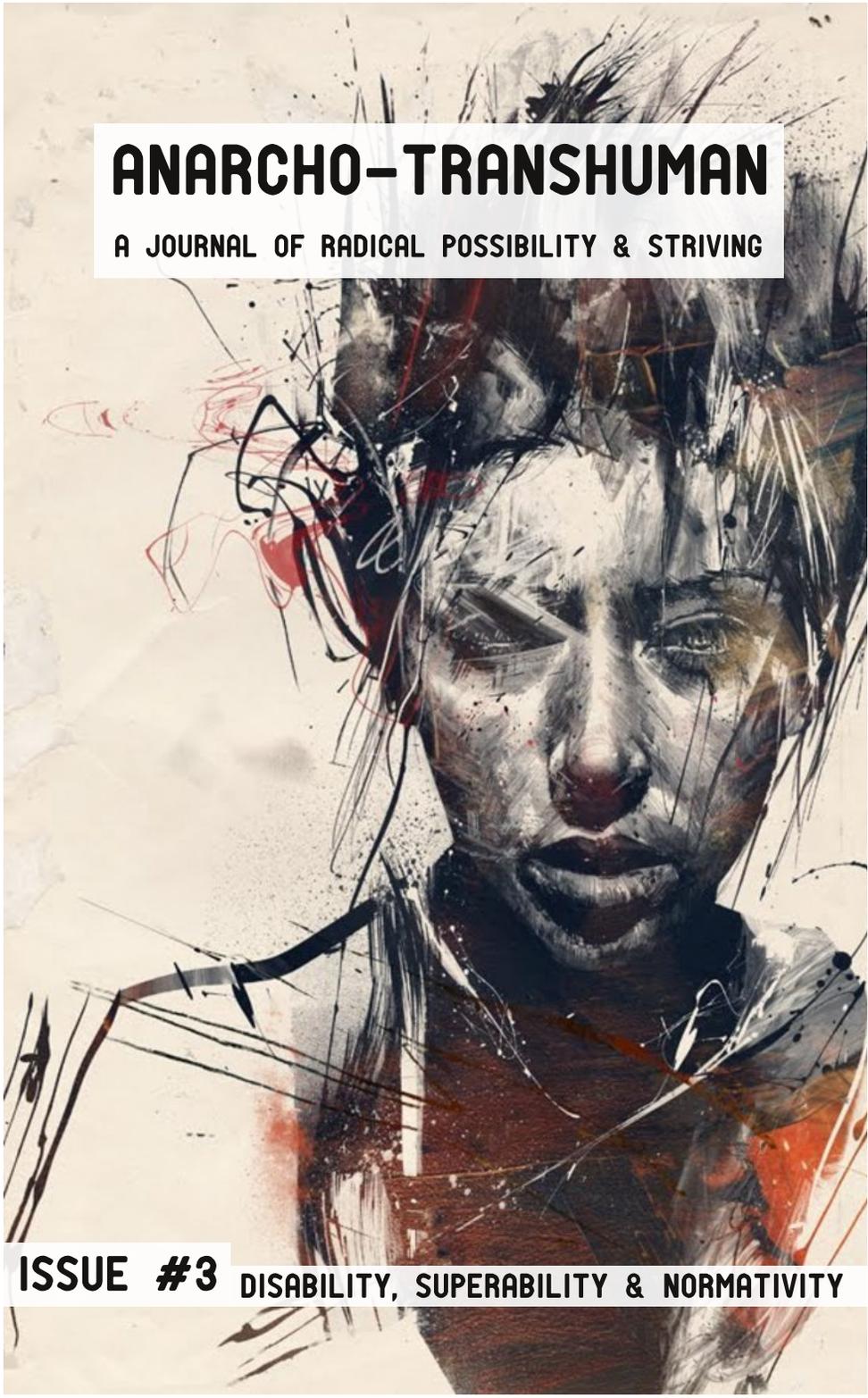


ANARCHO-TRANSHUMAN IS A JOURNAL OF THE UNCONTENT, OF THOSE WHO REFUSE TO EVER SETTLE OR TEMPER THEIR DEMANDS.

IN THE WORDS OF ANARCHISTS THROUGHOUT THE AGES, WE DON'T WANT ANY ONE THING, WE WANT EVERYTHING.

An abstract painting of a human face, rendered in a style reminiscent of Jackson Pollock's 'Number 1, 1951'. The face is composed of various shades of grey, white, and black, with splatters of red and orange. The background is a mix of light and dark tones, with some red and orange splatters. The overall effect is one of intense, chaotic energy.

ANARCHO-TRANSHUMAN

A JOURNAL OF RADICAL POSSIBILITY & STRIVING

ISSUE #3 **DISABILITY, SUPERABILITY & NORMATIVITY**

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ANARCHO-TRANSHUMAN

A JOURNAL OF RADICAL POSSIBILITY & STRIVING

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Points of Unity

Opposed to all power relations and social structures limiting or constricting agency; including but not limited to capitalism, the state, racism, sexism, heteronormativity, speciesism, and basically being a dick. Although technically if you want to become like a giant penis we suppose that's your own matter. For cognitive and morphological freedom.

ANARCHO-TRANSHUMAN

A JOURNAL OF RADICAL POSSIBILITY & STRIVING

ISSUE 3

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different name tag. All of her fire and complex thought seems to have vanished into a sort of 'popular girl delight'. She seems to remember nothing of her concern or illicit ideas. Her anguish, as a form of resistance, is gone. There is something to be said of this final scene in regards to the meaning behind our experiences of neurological diversity. Depression for one, may be the bane of their existence, pushing them ever deeper into needless suffering, and yet for another it may feel as though it is an appropriate response to a world gone to shit, wherein losing their depression would feel like losing their reality. Compulsory happiness is itself a method of control and coercion. Therefore, the integral piece is abundance of options and the morphological freedom to consent meaningfully in the process of engagement with these choices. Even if this can be said in a sentence, it is vastly complex as it spells out in a wide variety of cases. It is therefore the duty of intellectual vigilance and a firm grasp of ethics that these ventures may be correctly explored. Anarchism and its emphasis on decentralization, autonomy, freedom, mitigation of unnecessary harm, and resistance to authority provide a strong foundation upon which to build networks of neuro-diverse interaction amongst those who opt for a variety of genetic alterations and those who do not.

Thanks to Casey Condit, Pat Fisher, Emma Buck, and Ben Bonyahadi for your support and inspiration.

we find meaningful or useful in order to expand our agency and degrees of freedom and as a radical act of autonomy.

Reticence and Resistance

All of these technologies of gene editing have, in equal or greater measure, the power to be utilized as tools in domination. In his 1962 speech entitled, “The Ultimate Revolution” Aldous Huxley famously remarked,

“There will be, in the next generation or so, a pharmacological method of making people love their servitude, and producing dictatorship without tears, so to speak, producing a kind of painless concentration camp for entire societies, so that people will in fact have their liberties taken away from them, but will rather enjoy it, because they will be distracted from any desire to rebel by propaganda or brainwashing, or brainwashing enhanced by pharmacological methods. And this seems to be the final revolution”

This quote was a prescient foreshadowing of much that has come to pass and yet other phenomena likely upstream. All of these gene-editing techniques of augmentation or alteration will of course be subsidized and controlled, especially in the U.S. by the military-industrial complex and corporate monopolies protected and sustained by statist intervention. As anarcho-transhumanists, it is our duty to liberate these technologies such that they may be utilized radically and accessibly to all that desire them. It is with these fears of domination and ethical dilemmas that we engage bravely but also with appropriate reticence with shaping the river of life.

In the final scenes of the Twilight Zone episode mentioned in the introduction, Marilyn, the main character who sought to resist the pressures to upgrade into subdued normativity, is tricked into receiving the treatment. She emerges looking exactly like her best friend but with a

They draw a random line and call it normal. Anyone who deviates is either pitied or viciously suppressed.

When our brains and bodies constrain us society happily layers on further shackles. When we dig our own unique tunnels to freedom society recoils in horror.

We who have been dehumanized are setting off on new voyages beyond you mere humans. We are leaning into our inhumanity, embracing the novel possibilities your world would deny us. We inert broken objects that so perturb you by our audacity to exist are spreading our agency in directions you have never thought to consider.

We are brick by brick breaking through the limits of our bodies and your suffocating norms. Demolishing the wall between disability and superability, branching out in all directions.

The futures are ours.

right to edit it as an extension of their own morphological freedom. This should of course be done with reasonable deference towards what the potential life would most likely vye for itself. However, zygote editing or early abortions are not the only frontiers for genetic engineering that could be turned towards a radical purpose of divergence.

An interesting forefront is the ongoing revelations surrounding optogenetics which is a system for controlling cells with light. Optogenetics focuses especially on neurons and can even teach optogenetic cells to glow according to specific conditions, triggering a real-time feedback loop. Substances can be taken in a pill form that activate these processes and last up to several days. They are even teaching the trained cells to be able to then train other cells in turn, in order to continue the work of the substance post half-life. Researchers at Brown University, are currently exploring the possibilities in regards to epilepsy wherein, “BL-OG [bioluminescent opto-genetics] -enabled neurons in the brain could be programmed to glow red (like a traffic light) if calcium ions are surging in too quickly. That red glow could trigger neighboring optogenetic cells to dampen their excitation amid the calcium buildup, effectively stopping a seizure as soon as it starts.” One of the most remarkable aspects of BL-OG is the precision with which it is capable of functioning. No doubt, as this technology advances, bio-hackable versions could be created that could potentially help with everything from, breaking away from a memetic virus and/or bad habit such as addictions or PTSD loops to treating Parkinson's disease and diabetes. The bio-hacker experiments can continue to be open source published such as was done with the night vision eye drops created by the folks at Science For the Masses or outlined in the book “Biohackers: The Politics of an Open Science” by Alessandro Delfanti. The BL-OG work is just one example of a plethora of fields attempting to do the once considered impossible, editing a mature neuron column or genetic sequence. As these technologies advance, the base genetics you've been given at birth could become little more than a suggestion as we shape ourselves into the beings that we wish to be. This would lessen the ethical dilemmas of genetic material donors deciding pre-birth what their child should be like. As we advance into editing our brains, the possibilities abound. We can choose to diverge or assimilate in ways that

aspects are biological they have the potential to be gene edited and selected for or altered against. Early autism detection could give genetic material donors the opportunity to think deeply about questions like whether they really have the patience to raise a child that is neuro-typical (see what I did there..) and could abort early pregnancies until they were able to have an autistic child. Genetic material donors could then select against some of the traits more likely to cause severe suffering in favor of those they believe the child would most likely opt for themselves. Of course the alternative is also true, parents who know that they are not appropriate for raising a neurodivergent child could spare a potential child the suffering of their generally thinly-veiled resentment.

The key for consenting adults is of course morphological freedom, both in the consent and autonomy senses of the phrase. Adults capable of the decision making faculties needed to meaningfully consent should be given autonomy over their choices and this applies equally to autistic persons. Should they resist medical or surgical technologies, this is their choice but, should they opt for it, it should be made available to them however strange it may seem to others.

Genetic Donors as Gods and Morphological Freedom

This view that focus on various early pregnancy or zygote related gene-editing choices sets up the genetic material donators as something akin to gods. There is of course a host of ethical considerations surrounding disability, ableism, and neurodiversity related prenatal decision making explored at length in many places elsewhere but what this view often leaves out is the autonomy and agency of the being this gooey cluster of cells could potentially become. This is a central ethical dilemma of life-- a baby cannot give consent to being born, much less with what starting kit of genes. However, while the potential baby is still a zygote it is technically an extension of the carriers body, whether that carrier is a trans-man, cis-woman, or laboratory womb. As long as that cluster of cells is not yet autonomous or conscious, the carrier has the

300 Million Random Assholes Voting On How You Die

R. Foxtale

They're going to implant it at the base of your skull: The fitness tracker to end all fitness trackers. It won't hurt. It will help. It will measure your breathing, your heart rate, your blood glucose level, the current state of your immune system, and how much sleep you got last night. When you begin to feel anxious, it will play soothing music inside your head. Soothing music or a guided meditation track — your choice. (Although studies have shown that the soothing music option has the most immediate impact on cortisol levels, so that's what we recommend.) It will interrupt your epileptic seizures before they start. It will stimulate nerve regrowth so that you can finally walk without pain. It will amp up blood oxygenation, improve muscle tone, fine tune your gait, and allow you to run a 4 minute mile. It will allow everyone to run a 4 minute mile. It's going to put the Olympics out of business.

They're going to implant it at the base of your skull because you want one. It's a little scary at first, sure, that's normal. But if you think you don't want one, you will be proven wrong. You're not some throwback hipster with a typewriter and a flip phone. You're not some radical cripp trying to make a political statement. You're just trying to get by day-to-day. You want to be chipped, not just because it's how you apply for jobs and look presentable in public, but because it makes having a body easy. Fertility. Virility. Obesity. Menstrual cramps. Exhaustion. Insomnia. Schizophrenic episodes: Sorted. What's your killer app?

Your fitness chip is equipped with cutting-edge technology. Program it yourself or give the code to someone else: your personal trainer, your psychotherapist, your Dom. Of course, the NSA, the Corporation, and the Government will have golden keys as well —

only to be used by responsible parties for absolute emergencies. Or routine maintenance. Regular upgrades. To protect you from hackers. To collect the anonymized meta-data that informs public health projects. And to remind you to vote. It will not tell your boss whether you actually have to pee again or if you're just faking so you can check your phone in the bathroom. Of course it won't. That's illegal. It will convert your nicotine cravings into an impulse to do fifteen push-ups. You will be better. You will be stronger. You will be more free to move.

Are you planning to jailbreak the fitness chip once it's installed? Be aware this may void the warranty and exempt you from certain legal protections. Plus, those off-brand hacks aren't very reliable. Better to submit a petition if you want something changed. There's a process. Everything will be put to a vote. If you have any concerns, we encourage you to write to your Congressman.

...

Dying is an incredibly unpleasant process. It takes most of us decades. Somewhere along that path, every one of us becomes disabled — which is to say that every one of us loses physical and cognitive abilities that we once had, or that the majority of people have, or that society at large believes most people ought to have even if almost nobody actually does. There is a great deal of politics that goes into how we, as individuals and as a culture, define “disability” — but, at a certain level, the raw fact remains that the physical process of dying feels fucking terrible. The desire to be a little more comfortable on our way from here to there is deeply, and legitimately, alluring.

The generation and integration of new technologies is often a desperate attempt to treat our disabilities. As these technologies allow us to increase our capacity in certain ways, the space of what is considered “disabled” also grows. The opposite of disability, of course, is not “ability” — it is omnipotence. Ideally, our tools can enable us to improve, can give us “superabilities” that approach omnipotence

Autism

(Please reference the Scott Alexander article, “Against- Against- Autism Cures” that covers some of these deeper questions in depth. Although it is, in many ways, an imperfect article, it goes into more nuance than is often encouraged within team social justice.)

The reality of neuro-diverse genocide and abuse through sterilization, institutionalization, stigma, denial of access, and outright murder both in present and historical contexts is a graphic one. These have additionally been the tools of fascist power in countless incidences. Nazi eugenics of course studied and learned from the United States. This world is not built to accommodate people with differing abilities or divergent neural architecture. Basic kindness (and a depth of disability and neurodiverse activism and research) suggests that the world should more often be changed to make itself inhabitable, than the individual should be forced to adapt to an incredibly hostile environment even though, wherein consent is possible, an individual may choose to make changes to themselves in order to augment their abilities. Just about no one is more familiar with this dilemma than folks on what is called the ‘autism spectrum.’

Institutionalization is so often a brutal and traumatic negligence enacted upon not only those who cannot communicate consent but often those who can and do not agree. Autism is very likely not really a disease in any common understanding of the term and instead points vaguely at a variety of symptoms in a wide range of acuteness. The popular understanding of autism is often much broader than the psych definition which often refers to more exclusively to the most severe range of experiences. Amongst all of these diverse symptoms are many that have led to unique insight (such as strong memory, creativity, and attention to detail) and others that have caused intense suffering (severe depression, self-harm, extreme sensitivity beyond the tolerable).

There is of course much debate as to which of these symptoms is environmental or biological, however, to the extent that any of these

shows that teens these days are queer af! Especially as progress in the field of non-normative baby-making advance, humans will be able to continue to expand the notions of gender and sex farther out into and beyond our currently conceptually limited perceptions of possibility. Currently, future parents are given an approximation of their babies future assumed gender based on a sonogram examining the creatures unborn genitalia. As bizarre of a practice as this is, it shows the ways in which pre-birth information has the potential to become a more value neutral event. Afterall, sex-selective abortions are generally only prominent in more patriarchal and over-populated countries that explicitly value male children over females such as China, India, and arguably the U.S. which has even naively attempted government regulation and intervention against sex-selection. As a society becomes increasingly gender equitable, this practice dwindles out as there is no longer an economic incentive for it. In many places, this sonogram information is more of a novelty than an important factor in deciding whether the baby should live and so it should be in general. This could be the similar future of early detected queer genetic predilections. Long live (at least to 160) the parents who declare “Based on these test results, our baby appears to have a 87.6% chance of being super queer. Neat!” and then moves on with their day. Early detection of queerness though, would also lead to an interesting dilemma amongst those conservatives who are both adamantly pro-life and anti-gay. No doubt there would be an upsurge in potentially queer babies left at safe drop zones but probably also a decrease in queer kids kicked out of their homes for coming out.

asymptotically, but our embodied potential is never truly omnidirectional. There will always be some force influencing the shape each person’s matrix of abilities takes. That force might be our own self-determination towards certain kinds of comfort or creative capacity, but it can just as easily be the profit motive of a corporation, the military aims of a nation state, or the oppressive norms of a xenophobic culture.

Biotechnology raises the stakes of this game exponentially. In our lifetimes, we have seen and will continue to witness increasingly seamless integration between machines and human flesh. These technologies are such an incredibly powerful mechanism of control, something that gives us so much influence over the slider from disability to superability, that to hand that control over to anybody else — a personal trainer, a medical professional, a boss, a commanding officer, a sexual dominant, your parents, your teachers, a dictator, the president, the mob — seems motherfucking unconscionable. I sometimes have trouble explaining why anarchism is preferential to participatory democracy, because so many people have been raised with an near mythic reverence for voting. But imagine a world in which a voting public gets to decide not only where people of various genders are allowed to pee but where, in fact, it is *physically possible* for them to pee.

Transhumanism has often been accused of a privileged elitism where ability is concerned: People with enough money can simply pay for perfect bodies and leave everyone else disabled in the dust. Given the demographics of the mainline transhumanist movement, this critique is not off-base, but it rests on assumptions that retain our current cultural definition of physical “perfection” — a definition shaped by white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, driven by preferences for bodies that are pro-profit and pro-war. For transhumanism to be ethical in the face of biotechnology, it requires an anarchistic core. One driven not just by resistance to the state, but by resistance to all institutions that seek to define some types of bodies, some forms of human being, as more important than others.

Anarchotranshumanism isn’t about *transcending* disability; it’s about queering and complicating ability so that everyone can be dis/superabled in a variety of interesting and authentic and personally relevant ways. I’d

like to see a world in which we all have space to be “disabled” and “superabled” in a truly diverse kaleidoscope of ways — much like the diverse kaleidoscope of ways people are developing, partly through tech, to be gendered. Where someone might consider himself as disabled because it’s hard for him to cry and be supported in seeking accommodations for that; and where someone else is seen as having a super power because she has wheels instead of feet. I will, of course, never be omnipotent. None of us will. I’m going to die, and I don’t particularly mind that fact, but I want more control over the process of getting there. I want that control on my terms. I certainly don’t want 300 million random assholes to vote on it.

R Foxtale's writing can be found on
unquietpirate.wordpress.com

Queerness and Abortion

As soon as people hear about the often poor intentioned search for a “gay gene” they begin to panic -- “THEY’LL KILL ALL THE QUEERS!”. It becomes an immediate eugenics and genocide panic. This reactionary response forgets that anytime we find a gene that we could select against, that means we can also select for it! That means that people who actually want queer kids can have them, or even select for them specifically, and the people who are transphobic, or the like, aren’t put in a position to bully and shame their queer child for the rest of their lives. This is ideal in many ways.

As a queer, gender-queer, transwoman who was paternally abused I would rather not have had those experiences or the toxic loops they emblazoned into my neural nets. I’m not married to this particular version of me as needing to exist in some arbitrary way. Abortion doesn’t mean that there is “no me”, it means that a different consciousness entirely is given a better chance at thriving. There could be no concept of me not existing or dying because there would never have been a me. I think it’s best not to mix my own fear of death with my sense of self-importance lest I begin to be an apologist for my abusers with the line of, “it made me who I am today.” Fuck all of that. I’m awesome but certainly not mandatory for the ongoing functioning of the universe. “I” would just have some more normative brother or sister version of myself existing if my parents decided that was all they could handle. As the technology advances though, I will have the ability to rapidly change my gender and sexuality anyways, so the kit of predilections and genes I started with, would be a mere suggestion on my life of experimentation anyways.

Of course the queer fear of eugenics through selective abortions is a reasonable one given the history, but do we really believe that society as a whole would select against queerness at a dramatically different rate than un-edited births? I mean, would you personally abort a queer child? I’m pretty damn sure I wouldn’t. I find it hard to believe that queerness would be (un-)naturally selected out and rather, trends moving towards increased recognition and reporting of queerness with time. Research

Choosing Divergence

The way that a society values its neuro diversity is incredibly important. In addition to having the ability to choose if a child is born with predilections towards certain forms of neuro-diversity, their should also be a movement to preserve, accentuate, and even optimize neuro-diversity-- to get the most good and the least unnecessary suffering. From Autism to Schizophrenia, many of the greatest minds in history had non-neurotypical architecture. This is no coincidence. Mutation and deviation is the root of all evolution. Through genetic randomness, alternative ways of being are birthed and given a chance to thrive and adapt or wither and be cut out of successive gene pools. To some extent humans have evolved beyond the most glaring aspects of natural selection, but of course it still has the power to make or break our species as a whole. Our survival depends upon our ability to value our own diversity and facilitate the transmission of genetic material that is useful to our species as a whole. Alongside the developing science of genetic engineering, should be a social movement of people who not only, don't choose against forms of neural diversity, but actively select for it. This could facilitate a (non-normative) normalization of neuro-diversity that could remove stigma and help to make the world more accessible for all kinds of people, regardless of where their strengths and abilities lie. This movement could be called "Genetics Against Normativity!" depending on how contrarian we wanted to be. We should help build the movement that celebrates and aids neuro-divergence even as we may choose to modify our own.

Change Your Mind

Mason Frost

My brain is not like your brain. This becomes more true if, unlike me, you are not afflicted by chronic depression. It becomes more true if you are a child. It also becomes more true if you are on the autistic spectrum. But even if you do not suffer from chronic depression, or if you are a child, or on the autistic spectrum, that does not make your brain like others who share those differences from me. You might be right or left-handed, you might possess some other chemical difference that gives you mood swings, or causes you to hear or see things others don't, or any other number of effects. Hell, maybe someday some heretofore unknown sentience will be consuming these words with the half-interest of an archaeologist who knows how wrong we all are about so many things, but still wants to know in just what way we were all wrong.

Autism, though, is not a single difference. That's the whole reason there's a spectrum. Autism manifests in many different ways, and can be subtle enough to never be diagnosed, or something that is much harder to miss. Even within the autistic spectrum, there are such great differences that it can be hard for one person to even understand what is going through the mind of another.

All of this is why the concept of neurodiversity needs to exist. Because we all have to acknowledge these differences, and it's important to know just how different one human mind can be from another. And it is also important that we not fall into a hierarchical mode of thinking about minds; the longstanding approach that has kept countless people locked away because no one knew how to reach them through their schizophrenia, or their manic-depression, or any other thing that made their mind different. Because different is not worse, it's just different.

But the current movement towards this egalitarian approach has

some problematic elements that really cannot be ignored. Some of it is the usual – opportunistic elements that take advantage of the noble core, the occasional focus on particular language over nuanced understanding, and a few folks here and there who just don't get it but can hum the right tune – but some is deeper and more concerning. And from what I've observed, one problem stands above the rest.

Neurodiversity should not stand in the way of people taking agency over their own minds.

At the very core of transhumanism is this: we should all have full control over ourselves. But if that agency doesn't extend to our minds, then it is incomplete. We all must have the ability and the choice to think however we so choose. And that doesn't just mean having our own thoughts and opinions. It must include our modes of thinking, our hardware and our software. To advocate anything less is a failure of this core value.

And so, we run into the issue that I have with a number of folks talking about neurodiversity. They have gone from demanding that people of all braintypes be treated with respect and decency, to jealously protecting their own particular neurological structures. And if that were the extent of it, that would be acceptable. I'm suspicious of anyone who is 100% OK with their brain all day every day, but fine – it's your brain, do what you want with it.

But some of these folks have such hostility to the idea of their minds being changed that they take umbrage at other people who express a desire to change their own. And that, I cannot abide. Imagine if there were a contingent of clinically depressed people standing in the way of research that could alter the brains of depressed people in such a way to make them not depressed, all because they were fighting for the rights of depressed people not to be marginalized. I don't know about you, but I would be fucking pissed. Well, this is going on right now in regards to research about autism.

Obviously autism is not depression, but the comparison is not meant to be an equivocation. Besides which, I can't speak for autistic people, but I can speak to my personal experience with depression, which is

Choosing Against Suffering

A few of the ways that I am neuro-diverse are that I'm a recovering addict with cPTSD (complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and chronic anxiety and depression. I would also argue that even my queerness and my transness are in the realm of neuro-divergence, even as they do not perfectly fit the socio-political structure of those criteria. These divergences make up some important and powerful parts of my personality, not the least of which being my compassion, resilience, and strength. That being said though, the notion that someone could select against the genes or have a first week abortion of a fetus that shows high probability that their life will entail this suffering of addiction, depression, and anxiety, is extremely appealing to me. The notion that someone would want to give choice and agency as to whether they want their child to be neuro-diverse in these ways does not feel like they are trying to eliminate or devalue me as a person. It feels like an increase in the potential agency of the genetic material donors to give their offspring the best chance at the least suffering. Depression and addiction are horrendous even if they've offered me certain insights and abilities. Maybe my propensity for extreme physiological cravings could be mitigated while the propensity for unbridled focus and dedication retained. To have the choice is better than to not. At least with the choice we can more effectively value the assets associated with these forms of neuro-diversity. Obviously this is more straight forward when the forms of neuro-diversity we're looking at have so many obvious negative aspects, such as severe anxiety, but the logic can begin to entangle in more ethically complex cases as well.

Morphological Freedom

Although many will be familiar with the essay entitled “Morphological Freedom: Why We Not Just Want It, But Need It” by Anders Sandberg I still think it’s useful to touch upon first. Morphological freedom is effectively summarized as follows,

“Morphological freedom can of course be viewed as a subset of the right to one’s body. But it goes beyond the idea of merely passively maintaining the body as it is and exploiting its inherent potential. Instead it affirms that we can extend or change our potential through various means. It is strongly linked to ideas of self ownership and self direction.”

Morphological freedom is the essential link between anarchism and transhumanism that turns transhumanism from a weapon of domination to a weapon of decentralized liberation and resistance to the limits imposed on us by dominance, or even by our own bodies and minds. Sandberg expands on this by pointing to basic examples such as antibiotics or sex-reassignment surgery that facilitate the actualization of our fullness as beings. Sanders then goes into a domain more specifically relevant to the content of this essay by stating that, “Our freedom of thought implies a freedom of brain activity. If changes of brain structure (as they become available) are prevented, they prevent us from achieving mental states we might otherwise have been able to achieve. There is no dividing line between the body and out mentality, both are part of ourselves. Morphological freedom is the right to modify oneself.” This quote shows how our right to happiness and modifying our genetics is linked to our right to being neuro-diverse, or even to pursuing greater degrees of divergence in service of our own preferences or happiness. Assimilative technologies do fall under this morphological freedom in that they are often a radical act of survival even if the purity of agency is complexified by socio-political pressures. This means that although divergence may hold an evolutionary appeal, our radical body autonomy also must honor the choices of those seeking to assimilate in order to better increase their mobility in other realms and according to various forces of domination.

similarly invisible, and happens to have its own stereotypes and misunderstandings to contend with. I can only hope that this comparison is taken in good faith, as an attempt to empathize, by people with autism. (And yes, I am going to alternate my terms, because there's basically no real consensus on which is better and I sure as hell am not going to be the one to crack that particular code... also every person I've met who has been diagnosed as being on the spectrum could not give less of a shit about that particular dilemma.)

Let's talk for a bit about John Elder Robinson. He is by no means the only autistic person who advocates for people with autism. But his particular story happens to involve a possible method for altering a person's brain so that they are no longer autistic. In his case, transcranial magnetic stimulation had an effect on his mind that allowed him experience a perspective he had previously been unaware of. I won't speak for him, since when the story broke enough people already did that. (Plus you can read all about his experiences in his books and this article <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/03/18/an-experimental-autism-treatment-cost-me-my-marriage>)

But whatever his personal journey was like, he willingly entered the experimental procedure knowing full well what the intent was. And not once has he denounced that line of research. From everything I know, the man is decidedly pro-science. And this has gotten him a lot of hate. There have been death threats due to his stance on the procedure. People want to kill a man because he believes that autistic people deserve the chance to choose whether or not they remain autistic. People with autism certainly should have the choice to remain autistic, and it is viscerally sickening to hear some parents speak about their children as if being diagnosed with autism is a fate worse than death. But being against the possibility of autistic people (or people who are allistic, I.E. neurotypical) changing themselves is fundamentally not transhuman, and it is a spit in the face of people with autism who might choose to experience life as an allistic person.

The bottom line is this; It's not your fucking choice. You don't get to decide what is right for a marginalized group you are not a part of, and for that matter, being in that group doesn't mean you get to decide what

is right for individuals within that group. Not to mention that this sort of mentality is at the festering heart of the disgusting tendency to claim to stand for a marginalized group at the same time as denying a voice to that same group. I'm looking at you, Autism Speaks.

If a blind person wishes to see, don't stand in the way. If a person feels their body doesn't match their gender, let them change. If someone wants an implant to increase their memory, don't tell them to get a fucking notepad. And if someone decides they no longer want their mind to function in a particular way, and you say "No, you cant!" then you're just an asshole, plain and simple. Let science help everyone to change their minds all they want. Because one day, when we've finally won against the enemies of birth control and cyborgs and bodyhackers and transgender folk, that is going to be the next boundary that we, as transhumanists, must break through.

equality need not be hegemony. Hegemony is in fact a false equality because it depends on the repression of difference. The complexity of diversity in network connections is the strongest form of horizontalism, and as such it should be the goal of anarcho-transhumanisms.

In many ways we face a similar dilemma now as genetic engineering is met with resistance to the very real history of eugenics. The reactionaries of this view tend to overlook the potential benefits of a wide array of radical uses for genome editing that are horizontal yet diverse; striving towards an equity that is not hegemonic but rather, exceptionally internally complex with intricate webs of social connectedness created through decentralized autonomy and technological advances in agency. Discoveries such as those surrounding CRISPR technologies in synthetic biology (a method for altering gene sequences) and pre-natal screening, lend extensions to the horizons of our collective imagination. CRISPR, although more well known, is but one of the many frontiers of gene editing technologies. Cox, Platt, and Zhang ("Therapeutic Genome Editing", 2015) review some of the various usages of gene editing and add that, "To date, four major classes of nucleases, meganucleases and their derivatives, zinc finger nucleases (ZFNs), transcription activator like effector nucleases (TALENs), and CRISPR-associated nuclease Cas9 have been developed to enable site-specific genome editing." These tools offer expanded avenues for disease reduction and genome augmentation which can be seen as areas fertile for resistance and new attack surfaces to the hackers of both life and technology. But at the same time, these discoveries also advance forms of potential governance and domination. It is for this reason that those of us who are so inclined, should utilize, push, and appropriate these burgeoning technologies in order better weaponize and optimize our neuro-divergences in order to both, decrease meaningless suffering and increase our agency. Basically, we should use genetics to make ourselves weirder.

Torrent all the science. Appropriate the state technology. Reverse engineer. Experiment. Hack yourself weirdly.

Genetic Engineering Against Neuro-Normativity!

emmi bevensee

In 1964, a subversive yet deeply racist episode of, “The Twilight Zone” first aired called “Number 12 Looks Like You” in which “Number 12” refers to a design of normative beauty towards which the young and “homely” Marilyn was expected to upgrade her appearance through a variety of surgeries. Everyone chooses one of these few designs to be their appearance and then wears name tags to distinguish themselves from each other. She begins to express explicit resistance to the process, eventually disclosing that her father, who had read banned books, had influenced her into questioning the uniformity of it all. Her family and friends try to convince her using many methods of manipulation. They eventually take her to a laboratory where they assure her that no one will ever force her to undergo the transformation but insist that with greater pressure, she will “realize” it’s what she truly wants. She eventually breaks down and screams, “Being like everybody, isn’t that the same as being no one at all?!” as she begins to realize that in addition to appearance, everyone has also had their personalities modified and made uniform. Her resistance to the process of forced normalization is seen in her tears. She cries in the ways that the “upgraded” humans cannot. Hers is an anti-normativity that is valiant, even as it is framed in a dystopic technophobia worthy of critique.

What this dystopia does not recognize, is both morphological freedom and the infinite diversity of potential upgrades. Her consent is coerced and her choices are limited. Had she had the opportunity to, with informed consent and full agency, be a chartreuse transsexual lizard queen amongst unfathomable arrays of personalized options, she would likely have experimented more freely. There’s a character named, Sigmund Friend who tries to convince her of the errors of her sick mind and essentially explained how this hegemonic uniformity was created in order to solve the social problems of inequality. Anarchism shows us that

Models of Neurodivergence

Ozy

(Note: I will be discussing brain-related disabilities, because I am not confident enough in my opinions on physical disability to be sure this model is useful. I am going to be interchangeably using “neurodivergence”, “brain weirdness”, etc. This is intended to be inclusive of intellectually, developmentally, learning, and psychiatrically disabled people.)

It is often useful to distinguish the map and the territory. When we talk about the map, we talk about what we believe; when we talk about the territory, we talk about what’s true. These are not necessarily the same thing! I can draw a map that says that San Francisco is in Alaska, but that doesn’t mean that I should be wearing several layers of coats right now.

It’s important to note that— even if your map is accurate— the process of making a map loses information. A map of San Francisco doesn’t include everything you see walking down the street; on the other hand, you can look at a map of San Francisco when you can’t look at the whole city. Different maps are useful for different purposes: a BART station map is useful if you want to figure out which train to get on, while a map of vegan restaurants is useful if you are trying to feed my boyfriend Topher. And some maps really aren’t useful at all: a map that includes only streets that begin with A— even if it were perfectly accurate— is going to be pretty useless for San Francisco street navigation.

Talking about models of neurodivergence is a way of talking about different ways of mapping the far-off land of Brain Disability. There are lots of different maps! Terrifying Inhuman Monsters Who Will Snap And Kill Us All is a map. Lazy People Making Excuses For Their Character Flaws is a map. Children In Adult Bodies is a map. This site includes descriptions of a lot of maps.

However, I am going to examine two maps more closely: one of which is the most prominent in non-disability-rights communities, and one of which is most common in disability-rights communities.

The medical model of neurodivergence works something like this: just like some people can have sick bodies, some people can have sick brains. (Brain sickness is traditionally referred to as a “chemical imbalance”, whether or not there’s any evidence it is actually caused by imbalances in any chemicals.) If your brain is sick, you should go to a doctor and receive treatment that will make you not sick anymore.

The medical model is very useful for lots of people. Many people find that framing depression as something wrong with their brain is helpful. It’s a big step up from the Lazy People Making Excuses For Their Character Flaws model, which all too often means that people are miserable and then blame themselves for being miserable, or don’t seek appropriate accommodations because if they just had enough willpower they’d be able to fix it.

However, it also has serious flaws. The medical model leads to the idea that the only reason one could want to refuse treatment is that you’re too crazy to realize what’s wrong with you. While it is true that sometimes people are too crazy to realize that treatment would be in their best interests, many times people legitimately feel that hospitalization, therapy, or medication won’t help them; all too often, the tradeoff between these two is not recognized.

The medicalization of mental illness is often believed to reduce stigma: hence the array of “depression/anorexia/bipolar/suicidality is an ILLNESS” posters one is continually subjected to on Tumblr. However, evidence suggests that this may not work. While medicalization reduces blame, it makes people more pessimistic about recovery, has no effect on social distance, and either has no effect or worsens people’s perceptions of the dangerousness of neurodivergent people. Furthermore, in the past ten years, people have accepted the medical model much more, but continued to socially distance themselves from neurodivergent people, believe they are dangerous, and generally stigmatize neurodivergence. If anything, it increases levels of community rejection!

cognitive freedom? What of the green who thinks vaccines are causing an autism epidemic but has no problem calling for state-mandated population controls? Of course, this is where the difference comes in between anarchist thinking, and every other way of thinking. One could point out that societies that allow significant amounts of freedom tend to develop ideas faster. One could point out the epistemological problems in attempting to control a society from on high. One could even take the deontological standpoint and cry that taxation is theft. In all cases, the argument against ableism has been reduced to the argument for freedom in general – and appealing to people’s sense of freedom will often be easier than arguments about the nature of neurodiversity.

Anarcho-transhumanism is the machine that kills ableism.

entirely valid, but they miss something important: even if autism could be cured, it would not imply that we should attempt to coerce these people into taking the cure.

One can draw an analogy to a similar argument within the transgender community. Often times, one sees defenses constructed on the basis of transmedicalism. Trans people must be allowed to transition because they suffer an unbearable dysphoria that cannot be relieved otherwise. Trans women are a perfectly natural occurrence because all people undergo a process of defeminization in the womb, anyway. These facts may all be true, say the critics of this approach, but not all trans people experience dysphoria – yet they should still be allowed to transition anyway. The latter argument is made for good reasons, as it is an expression of morphological freedom.

So it is with neurodiversity. If someone with any form of neurodivergence wishes to become neurotypical, they should have the ability and the right to do so. This includes the mandate that people who wish to research the possibility of such a cure be able to do so. However, this principle also applies in the opposite direction. As much as I'm sure this will annoy many in the community, if a neurotypical person wishes to become atypical – for example, by being on the spectrum – they should be able to do so as well.

The second upshot is that ableism itself no longer has any way of inserting itself into the conversation. People can still debate over whether or not the concept of mental illness is socially constructed, but it no longer matters. Even if the advocates of neurodiversity were wrong, and mental illness was a purely biological construction, the ableist would still be full of jet exhaust. In a world of cognitive freedom, the concept of shaming people for the way their minds are constructed is completely foreign.

From the perspective of the transhumanist, there is not and cannot be any such thing as human nature. Is there some part of your “nature” that you'd rather do without? Perfectly understandable – and it's now a mere engineering problem.

But what of the eugenicist who explicitly rejects the concept of

At the same time, the medical model isn't very good for people who are going to have weird brains for the rest of their lives. A key part of the medical model is that treatment makes you not sick anymore. This leads to much-critiqued therapies like ABA for autism, which not only attempt to increase functioning but also eliminate behaviors that are neutral but not neurotypical– because as long as you're still visibly neurodivergent, you're still sick.

It contributes to a Fantasy of Being Neurotypical, similar to the Fantasy of Being Thin. You can spend your entire life trying to become a neurotypical person and failing– or you can accept that you're neurodivergent and try to live the best life you can as a neurodivergent person. It is possible to have a happy, fulfilled life and be badbrains as fuck. And for those of us who have incurable mental Stuff, it is necessary.

The social model of mental illness works like this: some people are not able to do things that other people can do; this is called “impaired”. A person who cannot walk is impaired. Some impaired people are not accommodated by society; this is called “disabled”. A person whose apartment does not have a wheelchair ramp, which means they can't leave the house, is disabled. However, even though I am legally blind without my glasses, I am not disabled; as long as my glasses don't fall off my face, I can see as well as anyone else.

“Accommodation” is a broad term. Reduced-cost housing or aides paid for by the government are accommodations. Someone's boss allowing them to work from home sometimes can be an accommodation. Extra time on tests is an accommodation. Your friends making dinner for you or avoiding wearing perfume that triggers your sensory sensitivities can be an accommodation. Occupational therapy or psychotherapy that teaches coping skills can be an accommodation. Even things that seem very medical, like psychiatric medications or electroconvulsive therapy, can be accommodations.

If you're having a hard time understanding the social model of disability, I recommend you read Alicorn's *The Social Model of Humanity*. Humans are impaired because we cannot sense hidden portals. However, we are not disabled by our inability to sense hidden portals, because nobody can sense hidden portals and so we build all our

buildings with doors.

The social model of disability suggests that a lot of the harm of disability is caused not by the impairment itself but by disability. This seems probably true: physically impaired people who can participate fully in society are just as happy as anyone else, while physically impaired people who have to sit at home alone all day are not. It also seems plausible that this isn't true for all disorders: for instance, it seems naively true that depression, being an impairment in one's ability to feel happiness, would suck no matter how well-accommodated.

Ozy's writing can be found on
thingofthings.wordpress.com

This Machine Kills Ableism

Lexi Linnell

The relationship between modern analytic and continental philosophy is an interesting one. Philosophers in each camp often believe the other camp to be inherently reactionary. The continental philosopher is advocating mysticism and anti-science, while the analytic philosopher is advocating imperialism and transmisogyny. However, I believe that discussion and cross-fertilization between the camps can be fruitful. In particular, there are cases where each camp holds one piece of the truth. One of these cases is neurodiversity.

The idea of neurodiversity certainly isn't unique to continental philosophers, but the idea does have distinctly continental overtones. Modern continental philosophy delights in breaking down the platonic categories our society has inherited, so this should come as no surprise. The point I wish to make is this: To the extent that neurodiversity grows out of continental philosophy, it is necessarily incomplete.

To complete it, we must add to the mix a philosophy associated with the analytic tradition – namely, transhumanism. Two of the core principles of transhumanism, after all, are cognitive freedom and morphological freedom. These freedoms must include, by definition, the freedom to change one's neurological makeup. If we wish to assert that neurodiversity is a good thing, why limit ourselves to the diversity we were born with? The body modification community certainly knows better than that. In a sense, body modification is simply the engineering of diversity.

There are two practical upshots to this approach. The first is that the defender of neurodiversity must not defend it solely on the basis that it is incurable. Indeed, I often see people defending those on the autism spectrum by noting that autism can't currently be cured, and that attempts to cure it often do more harm than good. These points are