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**Morals of Adaptations and the Death of Disability Culture**

As technology advances so do the lives of people. Improved manufacturing techniques allow for electronics to be smaller, faster, and less expensive, creating the ability for them to be in the hands of everyone. Now, with advancements in nano-technology, electronics are coming closer to functioning inside of our bodies. To the average person, many of these advancements may be interesting and fun to read about, but will not affect their lives any more beyond the latest phone or computer being better than its predecessors. However, to people with disabilities like blindness, deafness, amputations of one or more limbs, and even some medical conditions, these technological advancements could mean the end of their disability.

Currently, we are watching the very start of this “movement” and see it prominently in the deaf culture. Cochlear implants work by using microphones, converting sound into digital signal, and “injecting” the signal directly to the cochlea, which then passes it to the brain for interpretation as sound. Deafness in children is relatively easy to spot. Evaluations for cochlear implants may start as early as three months of age and surgery as early as ten months. Children with these implants are able to catch up to their peers within a few years. However, most parents will not learn sign language themselves, ignoring the disability and forcing the child to be how they want. As Urban Plains Alumni stated in *Communication Gap*¸ “Less than ten percent of hearing parents will learn ASL, leaving their deaf children missing out”. This, in combination with “Over ninety percent of deaf children in the U.S. are born to hearing parents”, *Communication Gap*, represents a large rejection towards the deaf. Moreover, a study done by the American Academy of Pediatrics shows that using sign language after cochlear implants holds no benefit and possibly takes away from proficiency in speech, auditory, and spoken language communication skills (Geers). So, what does this all mean for the Deaf culture? Short-term, a slow decline in population as sign language is more or less phased out. Long-term, along the current trajectory, deaf culture could eventually die out as the disability becomes more easily able to bypass.

Deafness is not the only physical disability with possible cures. For example, over the past few decades, advancements in technology have allowed for bionic alternates for limbs and in some cases eyes. With devices such as the Atom Touch and the Argus II as two examples. The Atom Touch is a prosthetic arm being released in 2023 and it is boasting to be “The first artificial human arm” (Atom Touch). The Argus II, a device discontinued in 2019 by its company Second Sight, transmits video signal from a camera in a pair of glasses to a grid connected to the patient’s retina. Both devices are the first steps into virtually solving their respective disabilities. With promising advances in devices such as these, how long will it be until they are better than their organic counterparts and what would that mean for society?

Engineers and scientists have an innate need to fix things, leading to the development of cochlear implants, robotics prosthetics, artificial sight and more. With the goal of improving the life of those unfortunate to lose a sense or a limb. However, not many stop to think whether something should be fixed or improved. For example, sign language may be mainly used by the deaf and those around them, but having a visual language can extremely beneficial for those with mental disabilities such as autism. In some cases of autism, the children may be nonverbal, making already difficult communication more troublesome. Teaching these children like this sign language has allowed them to be verbal and expressive in a nonverbal way (Delano). Research has also shown that teaching sign language to young children like babies and toddlers, improves their speech, emotional development, lowers frustrations and more (Educational Playcare). So, creating a device like cochlear implants that could potentially hurt a community and culture these children could thrive in. Parents have a moral obligation to give their children as many tools to succeed as possible until the solutions to disabilities such as deafness and hard of hearing and others are complete solutions.

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