

**Normality, Disease and
Enhancement
Weekly Short Paper**

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'Normality, Disease and Enhancement' is a chapter written by Theodore M. Benditt within the book *Establishing Medical Reality*. The main topics of conversation discussed by Benditt is normality in medicine and normality in athletics; two differing areas of human life. Beginning with normal in medicine, it seems he mostly submits to a Boorsian account of normality. He argues against value laden accounts; he states that a kidney, for example, is diseased whether or not it is in the owner's value to cleanse the blood (Benditt, 2007, p. 16)¹. Organs or tissue on a lower hierarchical level that fail to perform their function are thus diseased. However, "where there is difference alone (abnormality independent of failure of function)... is not a case for talking of disease and disability" (Benditt, 2007, p. 17). Moving on to athletics, Benditt begins to explore the idea of enhancements, mainly in regards to athletics, to the normal human being. Is it justified for one to use steroids, is it perhaps justified for all of competitors to use steroids? Ultimately, he claims that usually athletic competitions are about finding the limits of unaided or 'normal' human beings. However, in a world where certain practices or augmentations become standard for humans, Benditt is open to redefining what we may call a normal human being in order to reflect the technological changes in the future and in turn redefining certain competitions (Benditt, 2007, p. 20).

As a fellow subscriber to Boorsian thought myself, I would have to play a devil's advocate role in order to criticize Theodore Benditt since his views align quite well with mine. We can use Nordenfelt's ideas on vital goals to critique. According to Benditt, being farsighted would be categorized as a disease or disability as it is not 'species typical' and the eye does not function within the average range of normal eyes. Yet, if a person who simply does not have reading in their vital goals, could this still be seen as a disease or disability when it does not in fact hinder them in anyway to lead a happy life? If one perhaps lacks an entire kidney but his vital goals aren't involved around drinking or exercising excessively, would that person still be considered diseased even though he may live a fulfilling life? In certain delicate cases such as these, it borders offense to claim them to be diseased or disabled.

Works Cited

¹ Benditt, T. M. (2007) "Normality, Disease and Enhancement." *Establishing Medical Reality: Philosophy and Medicine* pp. 13 - 21. Accessed July 26, 2015