

Designed to Thrive
Weekly Short Paper

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'Designed to Thrive' is an article written by Peter Jickling mainly as a response to Laura Purdy's controversial paper *'Loving Future People'*. Jickling, born with cerebral palsy, begins the article with an anecdote from his early childhood riding bikes. He mentions that though he was born with cerebral palsy, it did not affect his experience having a good childhood¹. He uses his own example, as well as the examples of other disabled people later on, as a counter to Laura Purdy's stance that "disabled people are fundamentally unable to achieve the same level of happiness as the rest of the population"². With that in mind, she believes that parents ought to prevent births of those with a significant risk of living worse than normal lives. Jickling expands on this and argues that there can be a broader spectrum of disabled; to what extent should we consider obesity, people with weak hearts, lupus or even ugliness as interfering with the ability to lead a 'normal' life, where do we draw the line?³ This in turn is the heart of the issue, whether disabled people can live happy and normal lives, which Jickling tackles and comes to the conclusion that they indeed can. He questions Purdy's proposal that society's highest values are athleticism, beauty and health; rather he brings into discussion determination and courage. Mark Zupan, Terry Fox and Rick Hansen are all prominent disabled figures who have lead rich and fulfilling lives; Zupan going far as to claim "I've done more in a chair than I did able-bodied"⁴. Jickling ends the article with a claim that humans are all designed to thrive; we can all achieve rewarding lives through courage and determination no matter what our condition.

It is clear to the reader that Jickling's stance is against prenatal screening as he adamantly believes a disabled person can still lead a happy life through courage and determination. However, a criticism that arises is whether the disabled child may influence the parents ability to lead a happy life. It is an extreme amount of responsibility and work, compared to a 'normal' child, to raise a child who may be disabled. This added responsibility can ultimately have an affect on the parents happiness. There is also the factor of finances to consider; raising a disabled child can have expenses that some may not be able to afford. The burden of additional finances can also affect the happiness of the parents. I believe it should be the parents right to have these tests in order to be better informed and prepared for having

their child. There are cases where the child can affect the happiness of the parents and that should also
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Works Cited

¹⁻⁵ Jickling, P. (2007) "Designed to Thrive." <http://maisonneuve.org/article/2007/06/28/designed-thrive/>.
Accessed July 26, 2015