Engineering For and Against Disability: A Phenomenological Critique

Speaker at Duquesne University

Refreshments will be provided

TOM SPARROW
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College Hall 207
4:30-6:00PM

Tom Sparrow is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Slippery Rock University. He is the author and editor of several books, most recently The Alphonso Lingis Reader (University of Minnesota Press, 2018). His researches broadly in continental philosophy, particularly phenomenology, philosophy of the body, and speculative realism. His work has appeared in Philosophy Today, The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics, IJFAB, Epoche, and elsewhere. His current projects include investigations of the embodied dimension of humor, the peculiar risks of global warming, and the relationship between everyday aesthetics and personal identity. He holds a PhD from Duquesne University and a certificate in qualitative research from CIQR.

Some prominent advocates of human enhancement, like Jonathan Glover and Julian Savulescu, rely on a naturalistic account of “normal” human function when arguing that we should use biotechnology to eliminate future instances of disability. I show that these advocates’ concept of disability, and the normative arguments informed by it in books like Choosing Children (Oxford UP, 2006) and Unfit for the Future (Oxford UP, 2012), fail to incorporate the phenomenological dimension of embodiment and that this dimension should be included in any account of disability and human flourishing. Such inclusion, however, requires us to consider seriously the counterintuitive view that racial minorities are constitutionally disabled in racist societies.

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