300 Million Random Assholes Voting On How You Die

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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 crip 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 asymptotically, but our embodied potential is never truly omni-directional. 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.