

## Talk

Ethics and Political Philosophy

### **Disability, bioethics and cinema: a love-hate affair?**

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17.15 h

Miséricorde Room MIS04 4122

#### **Abstract:**

Disability is a greatly under-researched topic within the field of (mainstream) bioethics. The dis-attention for the everyday problems of people with physical and mental impairments explains the continuing tensions between bioethics and advocates of the disability rights movement. Unlike bioethics, film narratives have rarely ever ignored disability. In fact, compared to race and gender, disabled bodies are almost “obsessively” present on the screen. Still, the striking fact is that despite this prevalence, the presence of disabled characters is often overlooked by the audience in the sense that viewers seldom recognize disability as a feature of film. The reason for this is that for a long time disability has been used as an (invisible) narrative “prosthesis”: films relied on disability for its melodramatic power to evoke emotions of fear and compassion, but rarely ever focused on it as an experience of social, cultural and political dimensions. In other words, both cinema and bioethics make disabled bodies invisible. They exclude them of the boundaries of the real; of those whose lives can be counted as culturally viable. Nevertheless, in my presentation I will argue that it is possible to come to a disability-conscious bioethics through film. I want to explore this possibility by revisiting Martha Nussbaum’s notion of moral imagination and Butler’s concept of re-signification.