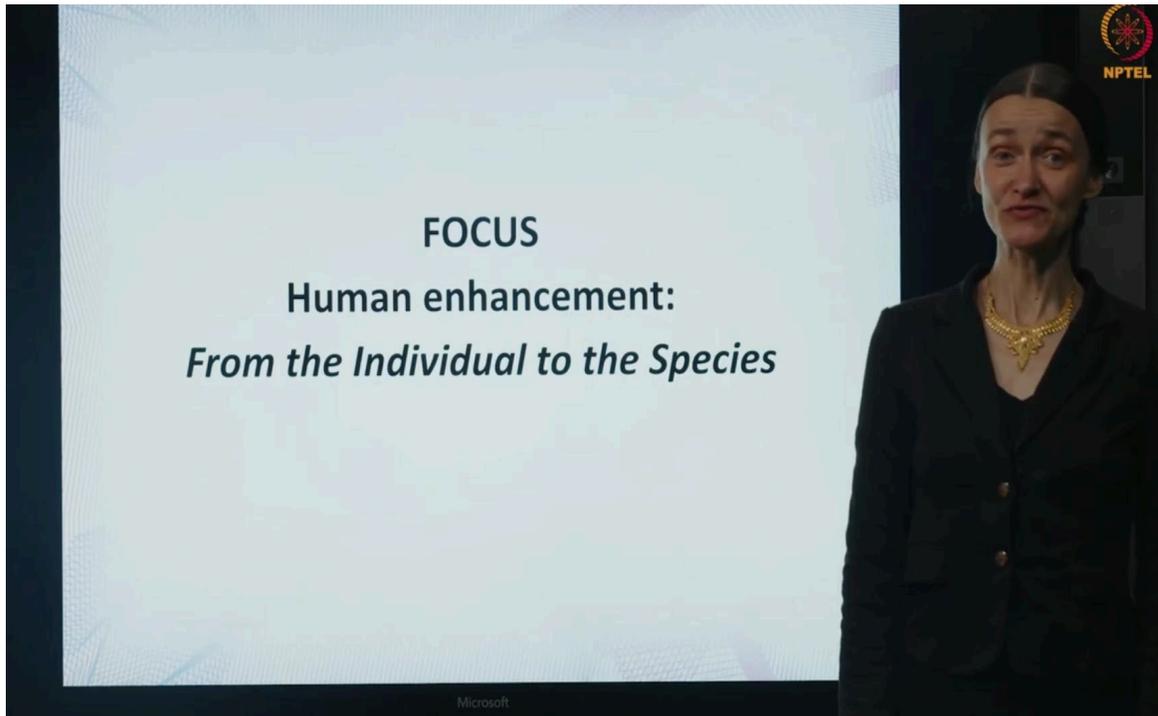


Posthumanism: An Introduction
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Lecture 39
Lec 39 : Human Enhancement - II

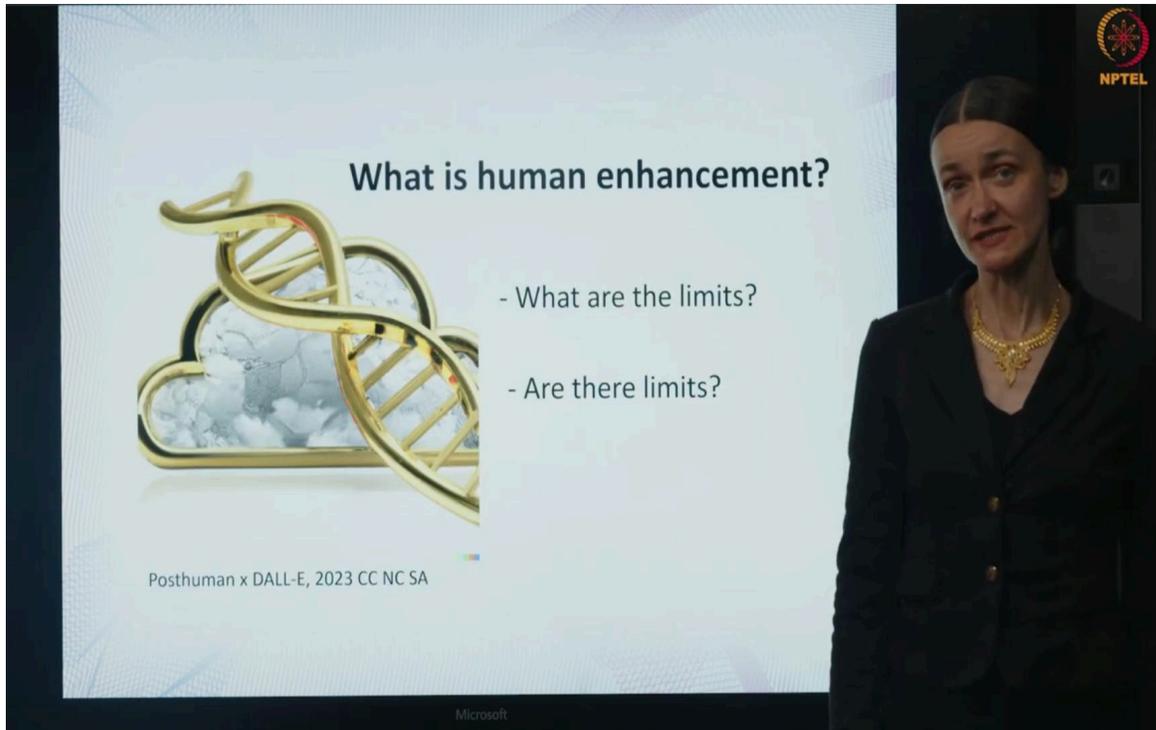
Hi, everyone. My name is Francesca Ferrando. I teach philosophy here at NYU Program of Liberal Studies, and I am incredibly honored to be reflecting with all of you about the topic of enhancement, specifically about the topic of human enhancement. In fact, in this second video, we're going to focus on the topic of human enhancement from the individual to the species. So what is human enhancement?

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What are the limits? Are there limits? And I want you to take a minute to reflect on this. Because if you think about the history of the human, it is a history of transgressing, of trespassing limits. If you think, for instance, of the way biological humans were living 1,000 years ago, most of them had a very much shorter lifespan compared, for instance, to some of the lifespans of humans living in, for instance, many societies nowadays.

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So what are the limits of enhancing humans? Are there limits? For instance, if you are enhancing an individual and maybe that enhancement is affecting that society, is that something we should consider? So take a minute to reflect on this. Before we go into a lot of different scenarios connected to the bioethical discussion on human enhancement that is currently being developed, I want to remind you that there are not right or wrong answers to these questions.

There are many different approaches. We are going to think, for instance, of bioconservatism, libertarian transhumanism, or democratic transhumanism. Just remember to remind yourself that your voice is important. Be honest with yourself. And when you're going to write some answers to the question that I'm going to pose in the second video, I want you to feel completely free to be honest with yourself, your perspective, and your insights.

By doing that, you are enhancing our entire species. We are going to focus mostly on two main topics that are, of course, being discussed deeply within transhumanist reflection. Then, in our third and last video, we will focus more clearly on a posthumanist take on the topic of human enhancement. Here, we are going to reflect on radical life extension and cryonics. So, how do you achieve radical life extension? There are many ways we could achieve radical life extension.

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One, for instance, is genetic engineering. There are many discussions. Should we do it? Should we not do it? I'm not going to give you answers on this, but I'm going to pose some interesting hypothetical social scenarios to have a deeper conversation about it.

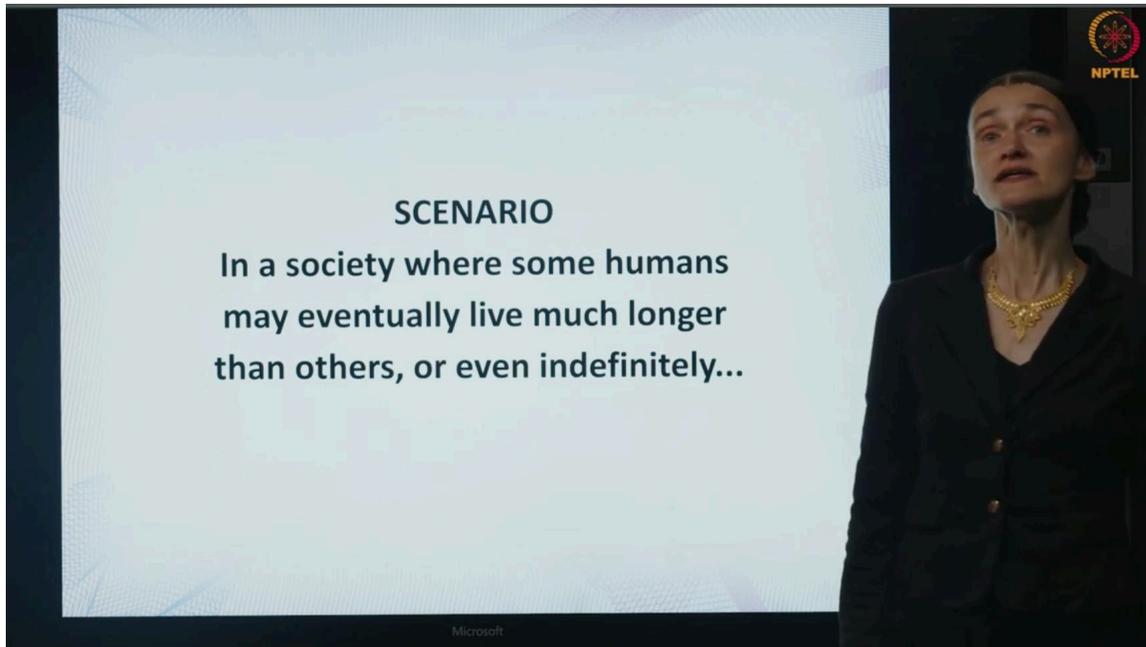
And also just to clarify some of these terms here, cryonics means the possibility of being cryopreserved after our so-called legal death. So after the body is legally dead, some people choose to be cryopreserved, which means deep frozen, if you want to make it a little more simple in the discussion. And the idea that something that could kill you today may not be killing you tomorrow, may not be killing you in the future. Think, for instance, of some diseases, some type of allergies or some type of viral attacks that 200 years ago would be mortal. And nowadays, you might just take some antibiotics and be fine.

So the same may be for some diseases that, for instance, are deadly right now. And so there may be cures in the future that take care of those diseases. So in that sense, cryonics is a possible extension of the current lifespan as we know it. Transhumanism is very keen on talking on these topics, and this is why the main transhumanist platform online is defined as H+, that's a symbol, and that means humanity. The focus of transhumanism is enhancing the human.

There is not so much of a deconstruction of the notion of the human in transhumanism. We are going to see this a little more in my last video. I am a posthumanist philosopher, I am not a transhumanist philosopher, but I think that transhumanism is very rich as a philosophy that allows us to reflect on possible futures. That's why we need also to embrace the possibility transhumanists are reflecting upon, because they are not talking about science fiction. They're talking about actual, currently, biotechnologies that are being developed.

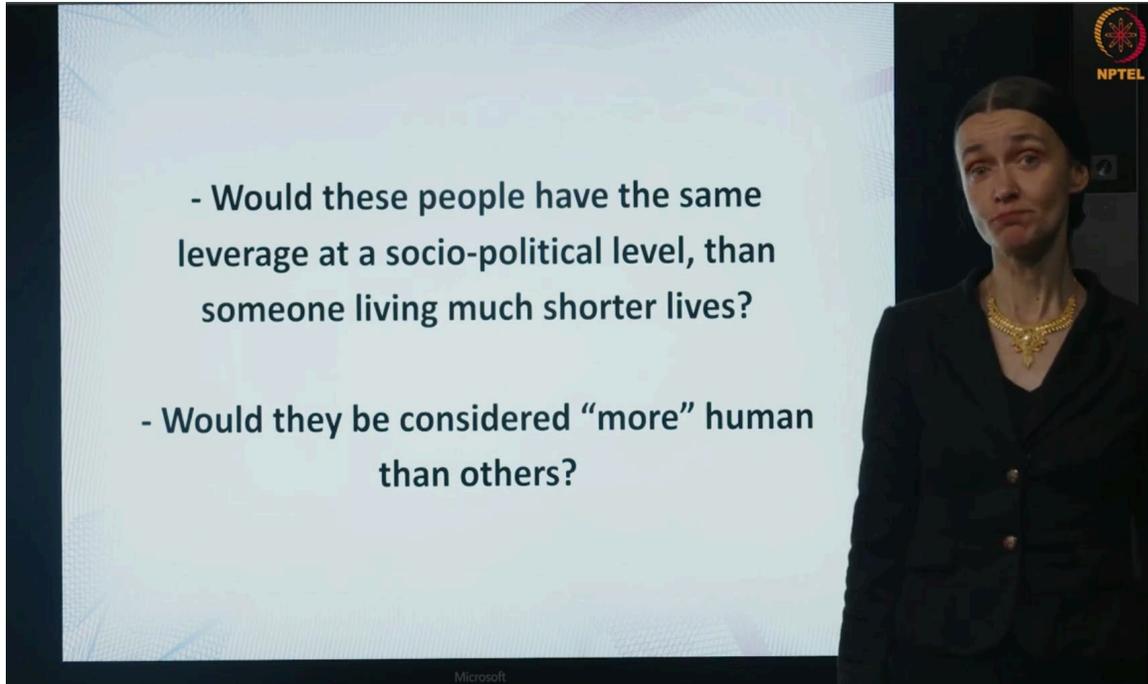
For instance, CRISPR, when we're talking about genetic engineering. So let's think of possible scenarios. Let's think of this scenario. In a society, where some humans may eventually live much longer than others.

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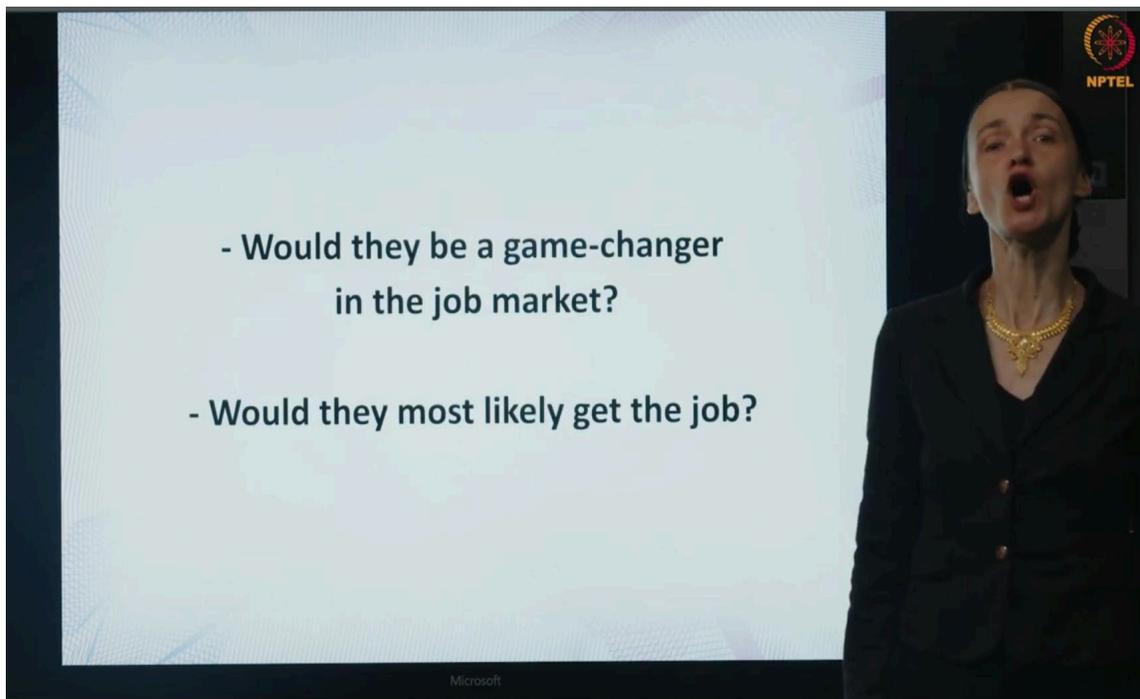
And when we talk about much longer, we don't mean some decades. If anything, we mean hundreds, if not thousands of years. So think of a society where there are people who may live thousands of years, or even indefinitely. Someone like Aubrey de Grey, for instance, is a gerontologist who talks about getting rid of senescence, of becoming old. So in this scenario, which is currently hypothetical but could become real in the near or distant future, would these people have the same leverage

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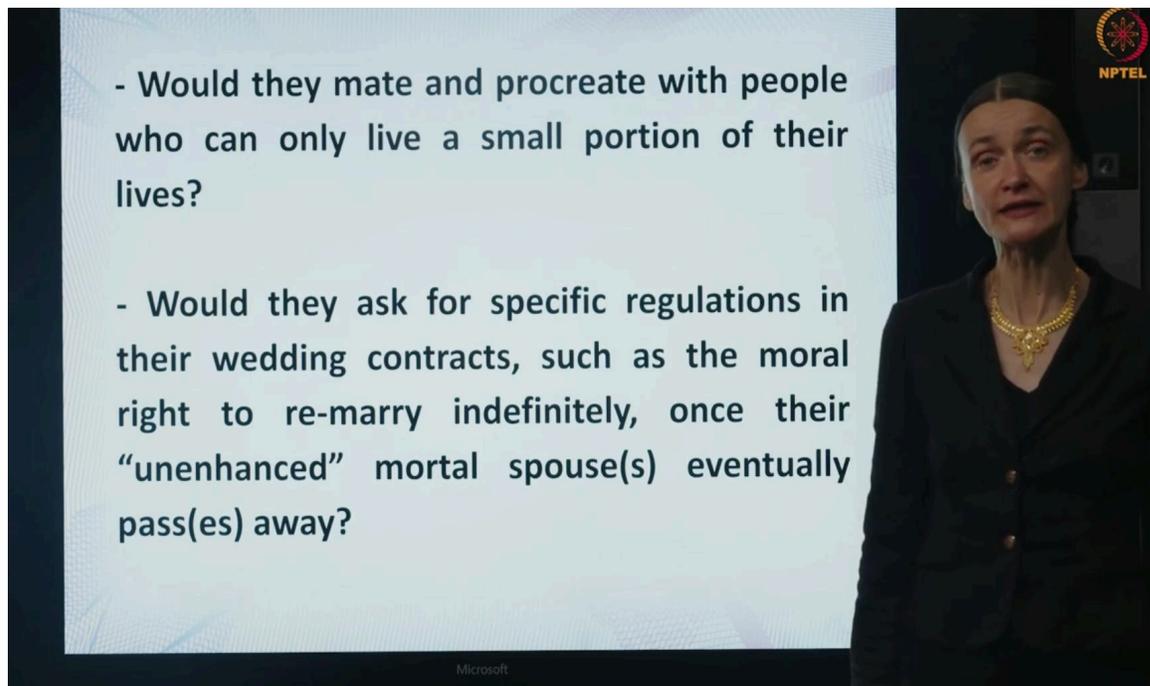
at a socio-political level as someone living much shorter lives? Would they be considered more human than others? Would they be given more rights simply because they live longer? What about the job market? Would they be a game-changer in the job market?

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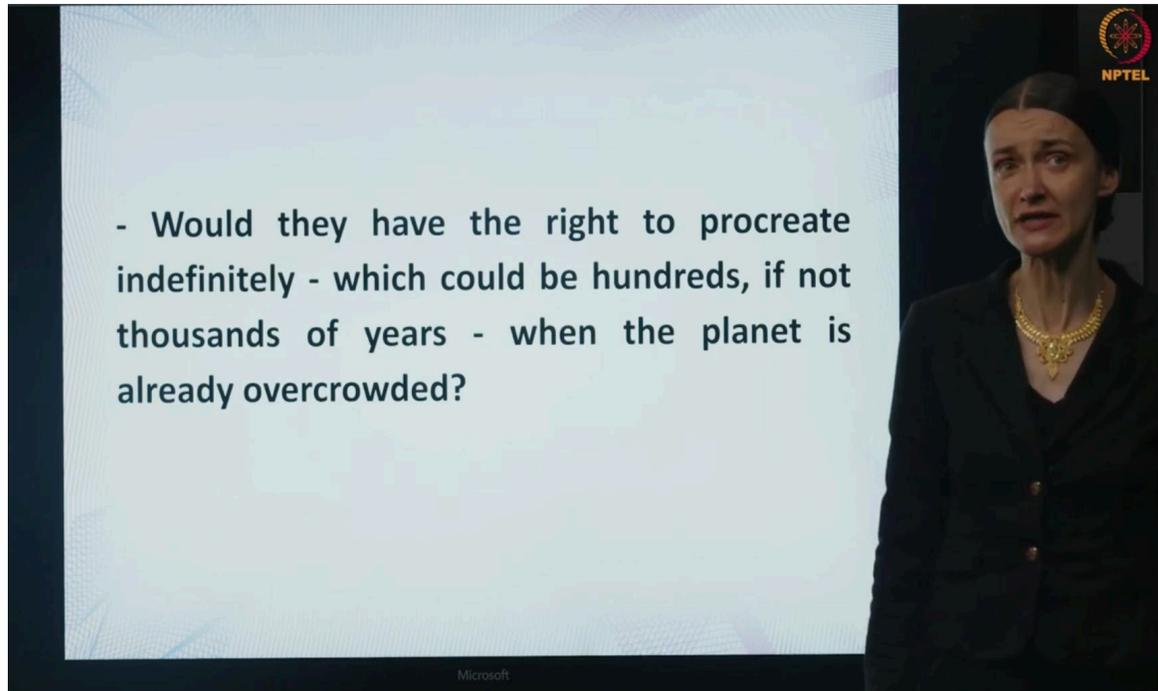


Would they most likely get a job because maybe they do not need to retire or maybe they do not need that health insurance that is expensive for some company to sustain? Would they mate and procreate with people who can, between little comma, only live a small portion of their lives? Would they ask for specific regulations in their wedding contracts, such as the moral right to remarry indefinitely? once there, between so-called enhanced mortal spouses, eventually pass away? Would they have the right to procreate indefinitely, which could be hundreds, if not thousands of years, when the planet is already overcrowded?

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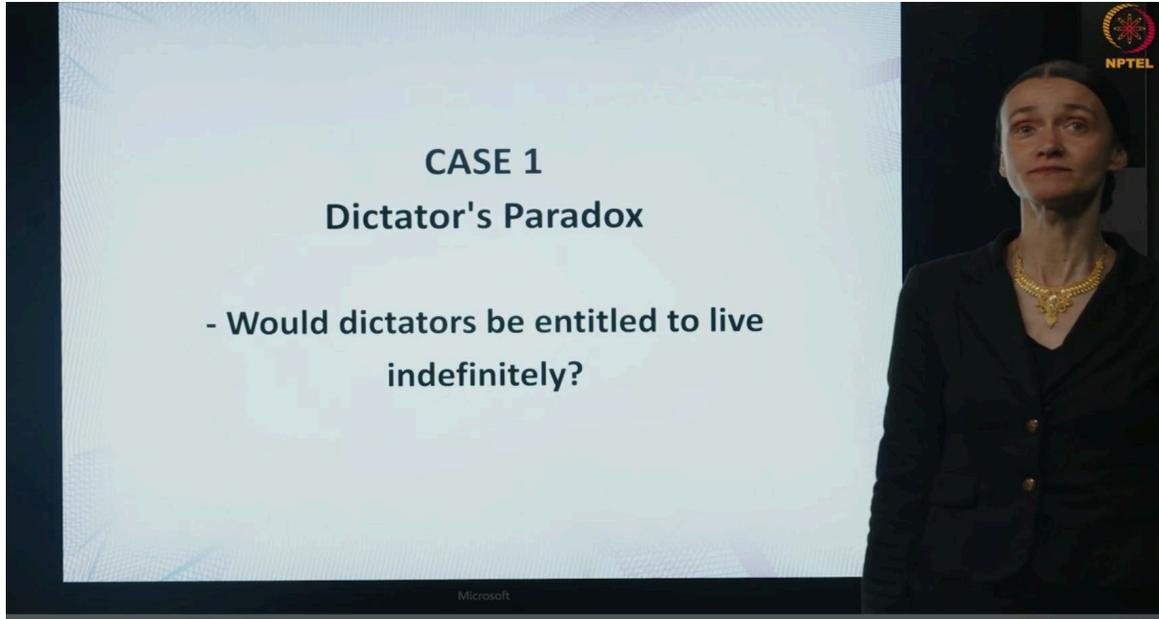
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And of course, here we are talking about not just a natural span of procreation, but also, of course, with biotechnologies of procreation. And more in general, should cryonics be considered a human right? Or are there limits to whom gets a second chance? I'm going to be very specific about this right here, right now. For instance, two cases.

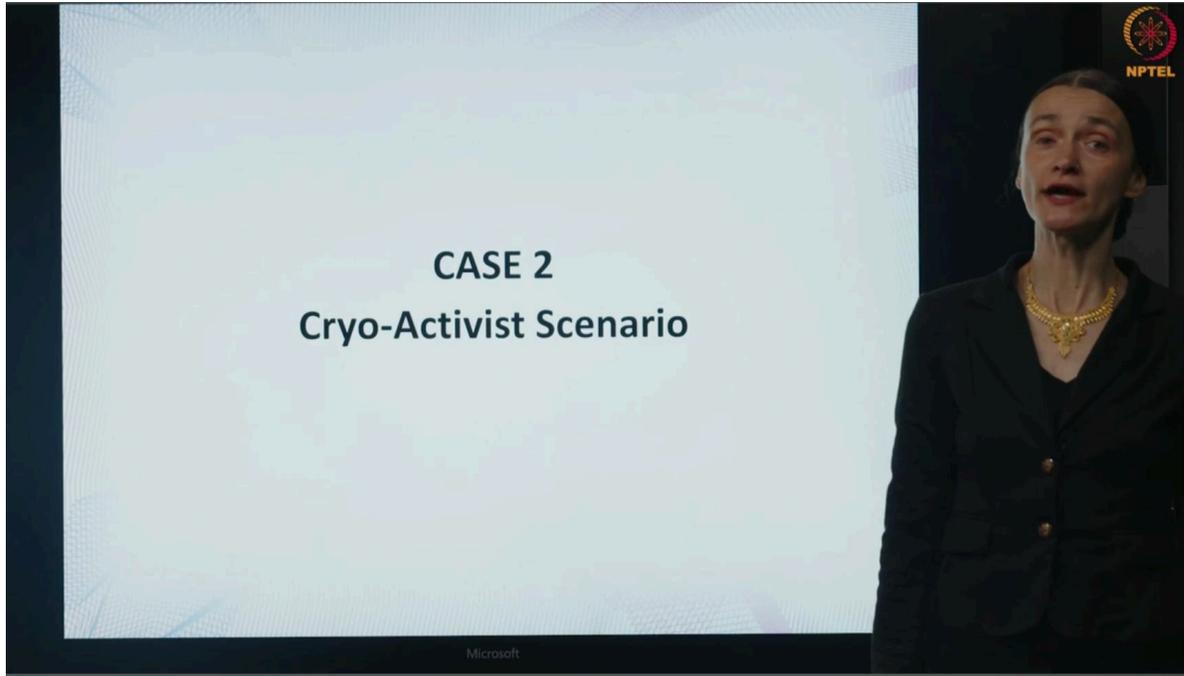
Case one, dictator's paradox. Would dictators be entitled to live indefinitely? Think for instance someone like Adolf Hitler, who was a dictator in Nazi Germany in the last century. Would someone like him, if cryonics is considered a human right, would he be given that right? And if he was not given that right,

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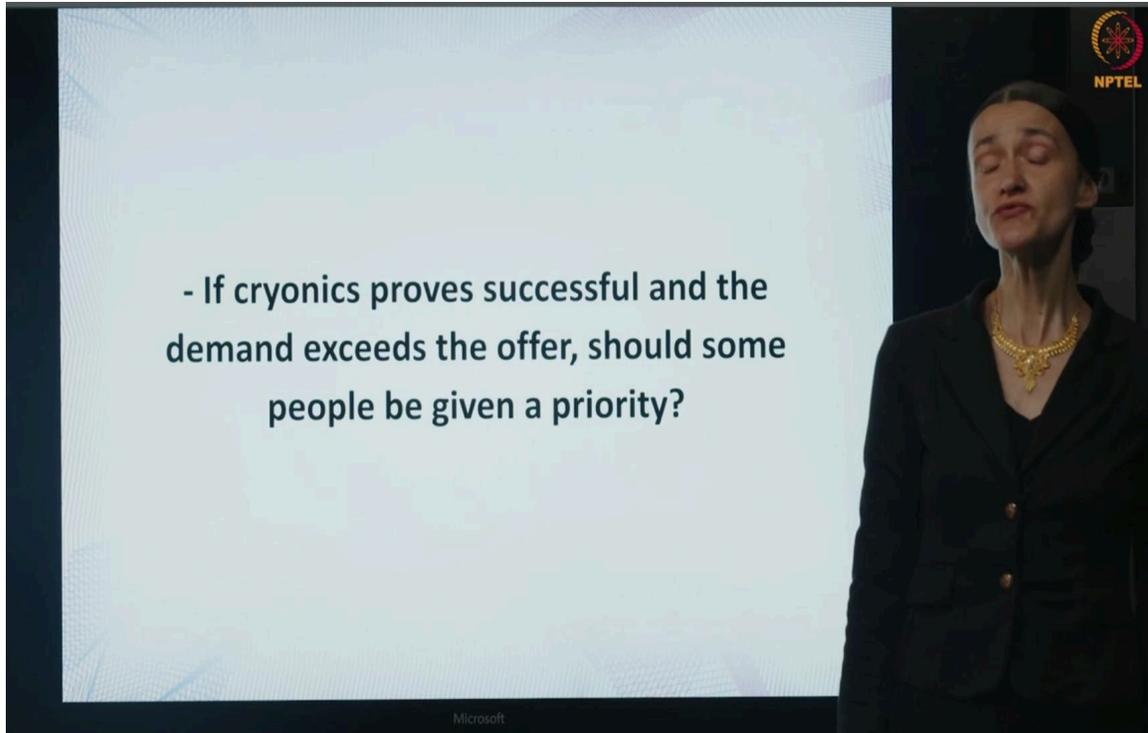


Would that be considered like a death penalty? Because all of a sudden, people do have the chance to live indefinitely. So, more specifically, is cryonics a human right? And if so, do dictators have the right to be cryonized? Case number two.

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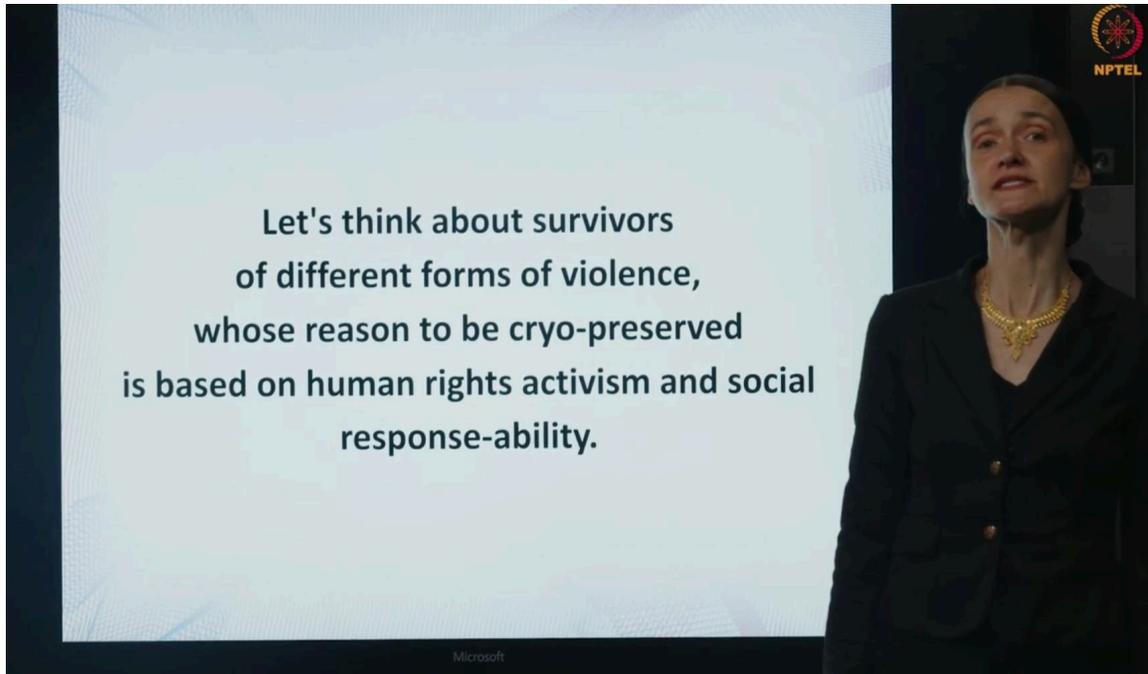


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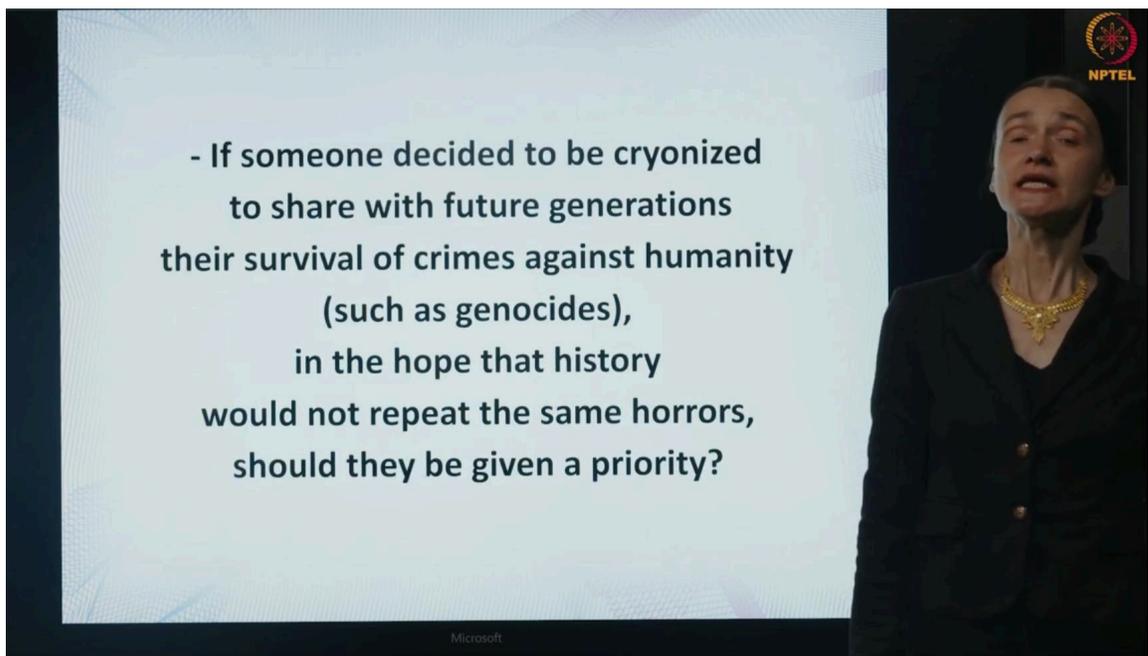


Cryo-activist scenario. If cryonics proves successful, and the demand exceeds the supply, should some people be given priority? For instance, let's think about survivors of different forms of violence, whose reason to be cryopreserved is based on human rights activism and social responsibility. If someone decides to be cryonized to share with future generations their survival of crimes against humanity, such as genocides, in the hope that history would not repeat the same horrors, should they be given priority?

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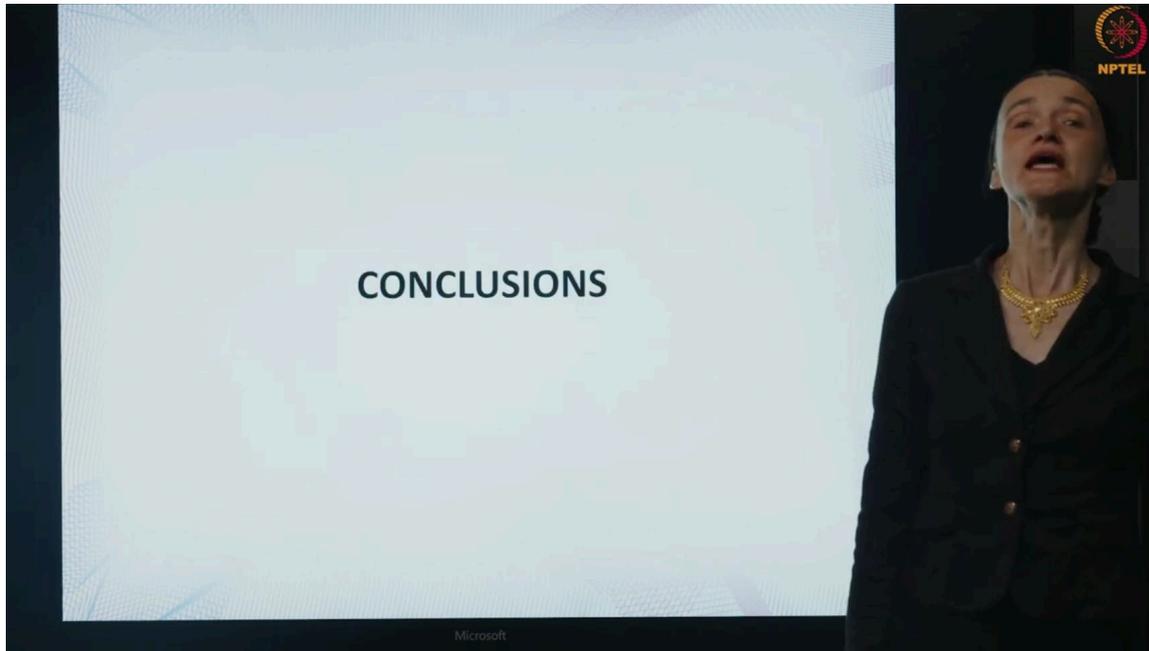
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So, let's think of a scenario where cryonics actually is successful. But there are not enough resources to resuscitate everyone. Would someone like a cryo-activist be given priority compared to someone, for instance, like Adolf Hitler? These are big questions. I'm not expecting you to come up with definitive answers.

In fact, there are no definite answers. But what there is, is an urgent need, exciting and critical need to reflect on these topics. Because these topics are not science fiction. This is already happening.

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There are many cryonics institutes around the world. One, for instance, is in the United States. Another one is in Russia. Hundreds of people are being cryonized. So what if the technologies become successful?

What are our choices? What are our intentions as a society? I want you to think about these topics in serenity, without fear or expectation. And in the last and final part of this lesson on human enhancement, we're going to reflect on existential awareness and a post-humanist take on the enhancement debate.

Thank you so much for watching the second video, and I'm looking forward to seeing you again in our third and final video. Thank you.