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BOOK REVIEW

Foucault and the Government of Disability

SHELLEY TREMAIN (Ed.)

The central position of Foucault within social sciences and humanities is not without reason. His comprehensive studies on discourses of deviance, sexuality and insanity are of importance for those with an interest in understanding the construction and maintenance of "normality". In disability studies, Foucault has been of interest mainly to researchers belonging to the third wave, i.e. "post social model" researchers and theorists (see Hughes 2001). However, Foucault, *per se*, has not received the attention that he probably deserves in the context of post-structural and post-modern studies of disability. Shelley Tremain's book on Foucault and disability is therefore a longed-for volume. It covers different issues in disability studies, such as the position of the body in disability studies, genetic diagnostics, legislation, and disabling architectures. Tremain has also given space to critics of the use of Foucault in disability studies. This is represented mainly by the inclusion of Bill Hughes' chapter, entitled "What can a Foucauldian analysis contribute to disability theory?" Hughes questions the benefit of Foucault to disabled people, urging for "arguments that valorize their voices, their embodied experiences, and their collective efforts to establish rights and overcome discrimination (p. 79)". According to Hughes, such empowering contributions to disabled people are parts of "the wilting humanist agenda" for Foucault. Thus, Hughes' critique departs from a solely pragmatic perspective on disability and does not take into account the possible need to theorize disability from perspectives other than the one of the disability movement.

   The volume comprises 16 chapters themed into 4 rather artificially created sections: Epistemologies and Ontologies, Histories, Governmentalities, and Ethics and Politics. Tremain's introductory chapter, entitled "Foucault, Governmentality and Critical Disability Theory", needs some extra attention. Tremain has shown previously her perfect way of combining Foucault and disability studies, and she gives a comprehensive introduction to the issue in this chapter. Tremain draws attention in particular to Foucault's concepts of bio-power and government and their central position in using Foucault in

disability studies. Also, and as she has done before (e.g. 2002), Tremain gives an interesting critique of the social model, departing from Foucault's concepts of bio-power, the subject and government. Her main objection is the unreflected way in which the social model treats the concept of impairment. According to Tremain, the social model apprehends impairment in way that "is actually formed in large measure by the political arrangements that the model was designed to contest" (p. 10). Criticizing the social model for treating impairment as a "pre-discursive phenomenon", Tremain urges for an enhanced understanding of the discursive construction of impairment.

Another contribution that requires some extra attention is Fiona Kumari Campbell's chapter entitled "Legislating disability", in which she investigates the ontology underlying legislation on disability issues, for example anti-discrimination laws and acts regulating welfare supports. Kumari Campbell shows us that the ontology of disability legislation is inherently negative. This means that even legislation aiming to empower disabled people in fact treats disability as a principally negative phenomenon that should be avoided (note that Campbell seems to understand disability from the bodily aspect).

Even if Kumari Campbell's chapter is of general interest, the connection between her analysis and Foucault is not evident. That problem is, however, not limited to her chapter, it is in fact my major critique on this book. I will return to this later. At the same time, there are contributions that make excellent connections between Foucault's production and thoughts and the field of disability studies. Chris Drinkwater's text "Supported living and the production of individuals" gives us a brilliant introduction to a Foucauldian analysis of power relations and the production of self-regulating bodies within supported housing. The transition from large institutions to supported living in non-institutional environments has given new means of practising power against people with developmental disabilities. Drinkwater shows how supported living creates the good (docile) body by eliciting certain behaviours and suppressing others. Drinkwater also shows us how the Panopticon is implemented in these supported living environments, through "the book", i.e. the diary in which staff write about the service users and their behaviours.

Several of the chapters are of great interest for disability researchers. I have already acknowledged those of Kumari Campbell and Drinkwater, and there are also other works of interest. However, the problem with this book is its ambition to make Foucauldian analyses in the field of disability research. That problem is two-fold. First, the fact that the book claims to present "Foucauldian analyses" puzzles me. What is a Foucauldian analysis? It is rather evident that some of the researchers have been inspired by Foucault; and attempt to walk (more or less successfully) in his footsteps. However, using a single concept derived from Foucault, isolated from Foucault's other, often interrelated, concepts, his theory of science, and methods are perhaps not enough to claim that one has applied a "Foucauldian analysis". Tremain does give us an introduction to some of Foucault's concepts, but does not provide us with a description of the meaning of "Foucauldian analysis".

Secondly, and as I have indicated earlier, the connection between Foucault and the analyses are rather weak, not to say absent. With some exceptions,

the contributors only use Foucault as decorative references; the connection between Foucault's theories and the contributions in this book is, with some exceptions, very weak and sometimes totally absent. In addition, the analytical strength can be questioned; several of the chapters tend to be descriptive rather than analytical. This is, for example, the issue with Martin Sullivan's chapter "Subjected bodies", in which he describes (rather than analyses) the treatment of paraplegic patients at a spinal injury unit in New Zealand. Despite the fact that he begins his chapter with a description of Foucault's concept of bio-power and the making of docile bodies, he is not able to connect Foucault with his own research findings on how medicine and rehabilitation produce paraplegic bodies. With few exceptions, Sullivan only reproduces paraplegic patients' experiences of rude medical staff.

It is a pity that the book promises more than it gives. The importance of Foucault in disability studies should be dealt with in a better manner than this book can offer. Despite this, I recommend disability scholars to read the book because the contributions are interesting, but do not read them with any expectation of finding examples of how to research disability from a Foucauldian perspective. For this reason, it might be a bit of an exaggeration when Ladelle Mcwrither in her foreword to the book states that "Every scholar, indeed every person with an interest in Foucault or in political theory more generally, needs to read this book" (p. xiv).

Lars Grönvik
Department of Sociology
Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden
E-mail: Lars.Gronvik@soc.uu.se

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