Foucault: The Premier Disabled Philosopher of Disability

(My Love Letter to Foucault)

Shelley Lynn Tremain

Abstract

In this chapter, I show why Foucault ought to be recognized as the catalyst of state-of-the-art philosophy of disability. To argue in this way, I highlight several elements of Foucault's work that have been indispensable to my analyses in (feminist) philosophy of disability, explaining how these features of his work circumvent claims according to which aspects of the work run counter to the interests and aims of disabled people. I conclude the chapter by associating my philosophical thinking about disability with the concerns and inclinations of the Foucauldian mind.

Finding Foucault

Across more than two decades, I have produced a substantial body of work on disability that draws from the pathbreaking insights of Michel Foucault, extending and modifying these insights to elaborate arguments about the ontology of disability and production of the ontological status of disability; the (bio)political implications and constitutive consequences of prevailing conceptions and assumptions about disability; and the positioning of disabled philosophers and philosophy of disability vis-à-vis the discipline and profession of philosophy. This body of work on disability has contributed in unique and vital ways to the growing and long-overdue recognition within philosophy that Foucault is a bona fide philosopher whose texts have dramatically influenced contemporary Euro-American ideas about subjectivity, power, epistemology, agency, philosophical traditions, and social institutions. In addition, this work on disability—that is, my general approach to the philosophical study of disability, an approach that has been heavily influenced by Foucault—is widely understood to have inaugurated a subfield in philosophy that I dubbed "philosophy of disability," while I and other philosophers who engage in this approach—such as Élaina Gauthier-Mamaril, Melinda Hall, Stephanie Jenkins, Julie Maybee, and Andrea Pitts—have designated ourselves as "philosophers of disability" (see Tremain, 2013, 2015b, 2017).

In this chapter, I want to address, in a more fulsome manner, Foucault's relationship to my philosophical work on disability and to philosophical work on disability more generally. In particular, I want to propose that, for all intents and purposes, Foucault was the first disabled philosopher of disability. Throughout the chapter, therefore, I aim to show why Foucault should be given this honorific by, paradoxically,

drawing from my own philosophical work on disability to advance this argument. The chapter is intended to be a love letter to Foucault or, at least, my tribute to Foucault that articulates some of the ways in which his insights have impacted my own thinking about power, disability, subjectivity, and social transformation; how his understanding of the self as a work of art has guided me in shaping my own life; and how his ideas about freedom and social change have enabled me and other disabled philosophers of disability to build community and conscience.

Foucault himself did not explicitly identify as a disabled philosopher; nor did he specifically categorize his work as philosophy about disability. Thus, I motivate this tribute to Foucault and his thinking by elaborating an explanation of how he can, nevertheless, be classified as a disabled philosopher of disability, an explanation that I unfold over the course of the chapter. Although my objective for the chapter is to demonstrate why Foucault should be recognized as the disabled progenitor of philosophy of disability, I note that his work has been unfavorably received by some philosophers and theorists who write about disability (for example, Scully 2008; Hughes, 2015; Aas and Wasserman, 2022; Reynolds, 2022). In turn, I explain why the criticisms that these authors direct at Foucault ought not to be accepted. I want to indicate that a variety of Foucault's claims—including his claims about the productive character of power, the constitution of the subject, and the critical force of historical approaches—have been (and remain) commonly misunderstood in philosophy and theory of disability. Although the chapter addresses how, in this way, philosophers and theorists of disability have contributed to the marginalization of scholarship with respect to disability that relies on Foucault, I should emphasize that, despite the centrality of disability to Foucault's own work, heretofore scholarship on Foucault in philosophy has, for the most part, ignored philosophy and theory of disability (Tremain, 2015a).

Disability in Philosophy

Research and scholarship on Foucault, like research and writing in philosophy more generally, has in large part both implicitly assumed and explicitly reproduced a naturalized conception of disability according to which the phenomena of disability (including its naturalized foundation, impairment) constitute a prediscursive biological property of individuals, a natural personal defect or disadvantage that should be rectified or eliminated. Philosophers who assume this ontology of disability understand disability as a medical (rather than social) problem that is most appropriately and adequately addressed in the domain of bioethics and cognate fields of inquiry. Indeed, the production and elimination of disability is the desideratum of bioethics. Furthermore, the prevalence of this assumption, this individualized and naturalized ontology of disability, has looping effects for the demographics of the profession of philosophy itself, whereby disabled philosophers—*qua* naturally disadvantaged—are perceived as defective, suboptimal, and hence not viable colleagues. While the subfield of bioethics is both socially lauded and financially lucrative for modern philosophy departments and (neoliberal) universities more broadly, a specialization in bioethics is also both professionally esteemed and financially lucrative for individual philosophers themselves. These circumstances, thus, go considerable distance to ensure endurance of the medicalized and individualized understandings of disability that prevail in philosophy

and the exclusion of disabled philosophers that these (mis)understandings entail (Tremain, 2013, 2017, 2024; Hall 2013, 2016).

In other words, predominant metaphysical and epistemological assumptions that philosophers make; specific disciplinary approaches that they cultivate; and distinct professional agendas, interests, and norms that they reproduce render the profession and discipline of philosophy especially unwelcoming, if not hostile, to both disabled scholars and critical philosophical analyses of disability. The prevalent assumptions that disability is a disadvantageous personal characteristic or property; that it exists prior to the social and political realms; and that it is properly studied in biomedical contexts, the life sciences, and related academic fields are products of the constitution and entrenchment of the "problem" of disability in philosophy and in society more widely. Foucault's studies facilitate recognition of how the production of the problem of disability, of disability *as a problem* to be resolved, has been a strategic technology of liberal governmentality and capitalism (Tremain, 2017, 8). Yet, the depoliticization and naturalization of (the apparatus of) disability that persist in Foucault scholarship and philosophy in general entail that critical attention to disability and its strategic production are largely absent from major conferences, workshops, monographs, and edited collections devoted to these (and other) elements of Foucault's political thinking, as they are routinely excluded from research, teaching, and writing in philosophy more generally (Tremain, 2015a; 2017).

Liberal Governmentality's Problem of Disability

Liberal governmentality's production of the problem of disability has been incrementally instituted through what Foucault called "biopower" (1978). Biopower—a concept that Foucault introduced to assuage complaints that he neglected forms of power that operate on the macro-level—comprises a vast network of forms of coercion and population control that target the life of the human being insofar as it is a living being. This configuration of power, centered on life and through which life itself becomes the ground for political struggles—in a word, biopolitics—is in effect a strategy of liberal governmentality. Put another way, the phenomena toward whose management biopower is directed (disability, sexuality, and race in particular) emerged as salient within the frameworks of liberalism and capitalism; thus, such a strategic movement of power must operate in ways that maximize the efficiency of the state and minimize its political, economic, and social costs, while at the same time guiding, influencing, and limiting people's actions in ways that seem to enhance their capacity to be self-determining, that is, guiding, influencing, and limiting their actions in ways that seem to increase their capacity to exercise their freedom to choose (Foucault, 2008).

Biopower, Foucault wrote, is "what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life" (1978, 143). Life—its enhancement, amplification, quality, duration, continuance, and renewal—has become an urgent economic and political concern that governmental policy and practice addresses to wrest control of and manage. Thus, biopower's management of life has entailed the inauguration of a novel set of measurements, including the ratio of births to deaths, the rate of fertility in the population, and the rate of reproduction, as well as a body of statistical knowledge and administrative cataloguing

of anomalies, oddities, states of health, and perceived threat to it. In the January 11 lecture of his 1977-78 course at the Collège de France, *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault described biopower as:

> The set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the subject of a political strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the eighteenth century, modern western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species. (Foucault, 2007, 1)

The elimination and production of disability has been integral, if not fundamental, to the mechanisms of this relatively recent form of ableist, racist, sexist, and speciesist power—biopower. In other words, disability is a historically and culturally specific social, political, and material problem that, as I want to argue, Foucault himself evidently understood as such. Indeed, many of Foucault's ideas about subjectivity and liberal governmentality were developed through his insights about biopower, including ideas introduced and refined in his labor-intensive studies of abnormality, deviance, perversion, madness, and other discursive objects that intellectuals and nonintellectuals alike commonly associate with disability. In many respects, therefore, my analyses of the *production of* the ontological status of disability extend Foucault's studies in these contexts and are thus aptly characterized as feminist philosophical inquiries into what Foucault (2003) referred to as the "problematization" of phenomena in the present.

Foucault's studies of the problems of abnormality, deviance, perversion, and madness (among other things) were not intended to provide normative responses to the phenomena that these problems comprise but rather were designed to show how these phenomena became thinkable, that is, emerged as problems to which solutions came to be sought. Likewise, my feminist philosophical inquiries into the problem of disability have not thus far offered explicitly normative feminist proposals or responses to the phenomena that disability comprises, proposals and responses that would purportedly identify and ultimately recommend a definitive solution to the "problem." Rather, the feminist philosophical inquiries into the problem*atization* of disability that I have developed are designed in large part to indicate how a certain historically and culturally specific regime of power (biopower) has produced certain acts, practices, subjectivities, bodies, relations, and so on *as a* problem for the present; that is, I follow Foucault's suggestion that inquiry into the problematization of a given state of affairs attempts to uncover how the different solutions to a problem have been constructed, as well as how these different solutions resulted from the problematization of that given state of affairs in the first place (Foucault, 2003, 20-24).

Foucault as a Philosopher of Disability/Disability as an Apparatus

Philosophers of disability critically assess assumptions about disability that philosophical claims presuppose and point out the ways in which disabled people have been either vilified within the discipline of philosophy or exiled from it altogether. Philosophers of disability also advance accounts of disability that resist and run counter to the dominant conception of disability that persists within bioethics, cognitive science,

and mainstream political philosophy and ethics, according to which disability (viz. as a natural disadvantage) necessarily reduces the quality and worth of disabled people's lives, inevitably leading to the social and economic disadvantages that accrue to disabled people. Insofar as practitioners of the Western philosophical tradition have, with few exceptions, cast disability as a natural, negative, and inert state of affairs in this way, they have effectively precluded disability from the realm of most critical philosophical inquiry. By contrast, philosophers of disability variously use and take a critical stance toward the history and contemporary practice of philosophy to articulate alternative ways in which to think philosophically about disability and about the current social, political, cultural, and economic position of disabled people. My argument is that Foucault, insofar as he introduced critical examinations of (among other things) normality and deviance into philosophy, that is, insofar as Foucault rendered contingent and political—that is, problematized—discursive practices and modes of subjectivity that contribute to the constitution of the phenomena that disability comprises, he ought to be recognized as the predecessor of contemporary philosophers of disability, whether they use his work and they agree with its claims or not.

Indeed, Foucault's claims about the constitutive and regulative operations of (bio)power have enabled my articulation of a conception according to which disability is an "apparatus," advancing a radically new political conception of disability that counters the predominant naturalized, individualized, and medicalized approach to it. In Foucault's terminology, an apparatus can be defined as a thoroughly heterogeneous and interconnected ensemble of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, scientific statements, administrative measures, and moral propositions (Foucault, 1980, 194). I (and, increasingly, other philosophers of disability) have employed Foucault's notion of an apparatus in various contexts to critically undermine the individualized and naturalized understanding of disability that prevails in Foucault scholarship, in philosophy, and in society more generally. To understand disability as an apparatus, in Foucault's sense, is to conceive of it as a historically contingent matrix of power that contributes to, is inseparable from, and reinforces other apparatuses of force relations, including settler colonialism, speciesism, white supremacy, gender, and class. As a historically contingent matrix of power, furthermore, the apparatus of disability comprises and is constituted by and through a complex set of technologies, identities, institutions, and discursive practices that emerge from medical and scientific research, government policies and administrative decisions, academic initiatives, art and literature, popular culture, and so on.

I employ Foucault's idea of apparatus to shift philosophical discourse about disability away from restrictive conceptualizations of it as a personal characteristic or attribute, a property of given individuals, an identity, or a biological difference; that is, my assumption that disability is an apparatus of productive power moves philosophical discussion of disability toward a more flexible conceptualization of it than other conceptions of disability provide, toward a conception of disability that is historically and culturally sensitive in ways that other conceptions of disability are not. Foucault's notion of apparatus has enabled me to articulate a compelling argument according to which disability is not a metaphysical substrate; not a natural, biological category; nor a characteristic or attribute that only certain individuals embody or possess, but rather is a

historically contingent network of force relations in which everyone is implicated and entangled and in relation to which everyone occupies a position.

Disability, when understood as an apparatus, should be investigated as a matrix of power that is systemic in circulation and scope and structural in composition and dimension. To be disabled or nondisabled is thus to occupy a certain subject position within the productive constraints of the apparatus of disability. Within the productive constraints of the apparatus of disability, that is, there are “disabled people” and “nondisabled people” but there are no “people with disabilities” nor “able-bodied people.” In short, the allegedly natural characteristic or personal trait called “disability” does not exist. Notice that this formulation of disability enables its incorporation within the domain of force relations; that is, when disability is construed as an apparatus of power (in Foucault’s sense), rather than as a personal characteristic or attribute (in a biomedical sense), its collaboration with other apparatuses of force relations can be more readily identified and more thoroughly investigated than has been done thus far.

Foucault as the First Philosopher of Disability

While Foucault’s innovative notion of apparatus has enabled me to historicize and contextualize my claims about disability as a thoroughly political entity, his groundbreaking arguments about biopower and the political and constitutive effectiveness of the norm and disciplinary efficiency of normalization have enabled me to articulate the pervasive and seemingly innocuous nature of the apparatus of disability and its naturalizing operations and techniques. These arguments about the ubiquitous and seemingly self-evident and even progressive nature of the products of biopower are most evidently encapsulated in Foucault’s work on how techniques of biopower have operated to institute the phenomena of sexuality—including sex itself—as inherent human traits; produce the subject of sexuality as a mode of subjectification; and consolidate the expansive scaffolding of surveillance and regulation that generate the (naturalized) phenomena of sexuality and sexual subjectivity and circulate around them. As Barry Allen writes:

> Foucault was the first (or the most persuasive at least) to describe how, through a supposed knowledge of the “normal case,” differences among people become targets of power. One example of this intermingling of power and knowledge is Foucault’s description of “the perverse implantation” in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1978, 36-49). The idea of perversion was one of the first ideas to surface from the medicalization of sexuality in the nineteenth century. Medicine identified a human sexual instinct, a natural physiological function in principle no different from other natural functions, which medicine must define and cure. Perversions were deviations or abnormalities in the operation of this sexual instinct, which was itself defined by a medical perception of normality (Allen, 2015, 93).

The greater was the extent to which psychiatrists looked for sexual deviants, the more of them that they found. For, as Allen notes, sexual perversions

are not medical discoveries about human nature; rather, sexual perversions are artifacts implanted among us by the so-called experts who “know” (Allen, 2015, 94). Allen points out, furthermore, that I have articulated this sort of claim about the artifactual character of impairment in an argument that, as he writes, “undercuts the assumption that impairment is a physiological condition distinct from (yet somehow underlying) disability” (ibid.). Allen sums up my use of Foucault to denaturalize impairment and disability thus: “Impairment, like perversion (and disability), is not something missing, nor a lack or absence,” but rather “is something added, an unasked-for supplement contributed by disciplinary knowledge and power” (ibid.). As Allen states, the identification of a person as impaired always occurs with reference to a statistically constructed “normal case,” as the identification of a person as criminal always occurs with reference to the law. All norms, as Allen notes, are artifacts of the disciplines that measure them and do not exist apart from these practices. Impairments are real but only as artifacts of the knowledge that measures their deviation from relevant norms (ibid., 95; also, Tremain, 2001, 2015b, 2017).

In the next sections of this chapter, I explain how biopower provides the motivation for the transformation of the “normal case” into a technology of power: namely, the production of technologies of normalization. Technologies of normalization have been instrumental to the naturalization of impairment and disability.

Normalization as a Technology of Power

In Foucault’s writing on biopower, he pointed out that the consolidation of the modern concept of normal legitimized and occurred in tandem with the new statistical knowledge and other techniques of population management that stemmed from biopower. As François Ewald (1991, 138) explains, “the norm” enabled biopower—“which aims to produce, develop, and order social strength”—to steadily do the work that juridical modes of governance, characterized by forcible seizure, abduction, or repression, had done in the past. The norm accomplished this expansion by transforming the negative restraints of the juridical into the more positive controls of normalization (141). From the eighteenth century on, that is, the function of technologies of normalization has been to isolate so-called anomalies in the population, which can in turn be normalized through the therapeutic and corrective strategies of other, associated technologies.

Thus, technologies of normalization are not indifferent, or even benevolent, responses to anomalies in the social body. On the contrary, technologies of normalization are instrumental to the systematic creation, identification, classification, and control of such anomalies; that is, they systematically contribute to the constitution of the perception of anomalies (such as impairment) and operate as mechanisms through which some subjects can be divided from others. Foucault introduced the term *dividing practices* to refer to these technologies, these modes of manipulation that usually combine a scientific discourse with practices of segregation and social exclusion to categorize, classify, distribute, and manipulate subjects who are initially drawn from a rather undifferentiated mass of people. Through these practices, subjects become objectivized as (for instance) mad or sane, sick or healthy, criminal or law abiding.

Through these practices of division, classification, and ordering, subjects also become attached to an identity and come to understand themselves scientifically (Foucault, 1982, 208).

In an interview that contains some of the most explicit and straightforward explanations of his ideas about the constitution of the subject within and through enabling constraints, Foucault asserted that the "modern state" should be considered not as an entity that "developed above individuals, ignoring what they are and even their very existence," but rather as "a very sophisticated structure, in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific patterns" (Foucault, 1982, 214). In Foucault's terms, to be a subject is to be simultaneously subject to external control and dependence, on one side, and tied to one's own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge, on the other side. Although Foucault claimed that subjectivity is a secondary phenomenon, that the subject is an effect of the nexus of power and knowledge, he did not (contra critics) deny that the individuation of the subject's agency and the lived character of its experiences are real; nor did he deny the materiality of the body and lived experience of it. On the contrary, as Bryan Turner, co-founder of the flagship journal of sociology of the body has remarked, "the body [was] a persistent theme in Foucault's work, especially and obviously in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2 (1985)" (Tamari and Turner, 2020). Indeed, Foucault acknowledged that these aspects of subjects—that is, the subject's agency and the materiality of its body— are very real constituents of and for them, as much of his later work shows. Nevertheless, he endeavored to underscore that such constituents of the subject are contingent and historically specific, not inherent to them, nor historically continuous. Subjectivity, for Foucault, is neither innate nor fixed, nor are the concepts of free will and autonomy—concepts on which the very recent Western idea of subjectivity relies—inherent and immutable.

Foucault regarded normalization as a central—if not *the* central—mechanism of biopower's management of life, the life of both the individual and the species. Biopower can thus be defined as a historically specific combination of normalization and population management conducted through extensive networks of production and social control. Beginning in the eighteenth century, Foucault noted, the power of the normal has combined with other powers such as the law and tradition, imposing new limits upon them. The normal, he explained, was established as a principle of coercion through the introduction of standardized education; the organization of national medical professions and hospital systems that could circulate general norms of health; and the standardization of industrial processes and products and manufacturing techniques. Normalization thus became one of the great instruments of power at the close of the classical age, that is, the power that the norm harnessed has been shaped through the disciplines that began to emerge at this historical moment (Foucault, 1977a, 184). For from the end of the eighteenth century, the indicators of social status, privilege, and group affiliation have been increasingly supplemented by a range of degrees of normality that simultaneously indicate membership in a homogeneous social body (a "population") and serve to distinguish subjects from each other, to classify them, and to rank them in a host of hierarchies.

Back to Normal

Allen (2015, 93) points out that Foucault, in his writing on punishment and on the history of sexuality, described how knowledges produced about the "normal case" become vehicles for the exercise of disciplinary force relations that target certain people. The category of normal is generally assumed to dispassionately identify an objective, static, universal, and ahistorical internal disposition, character, or state of human beings. Foucault endeavored to show, however, that the notion of the normal is a historical artifact that emerged through, and facilitates the operations of, a historically specific regime of power—namely, biopower. Following Foucault, Ladelle McWhorter and other philosophers and theorists have worked to demonstrate how the coercive and contingent character of the normal operates, in specific contexts, circulating in incremental and other ways (for example, McWhorter, 1999).

The etymology of the term *normal* offers clues to the relation between this form of power and the notion of normalcy. Ian Hacking (1990) noted that the first meaning of *normal* that current English dictionaries provide is something like "usual, regular, common, typical." This usage, according to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, became current after 1840, with the first citation of "normal, or typical" appearing in 1828. Hacking pointed out that the modern sense of the word *normal* was not, however, furnished by education or cloistered study but rather by the study of life (161–62). In an illuminating discussion, Hacking explained that the word *normal* became indispensable because it provided a way to be objective about human beings, especially given the inseparability of the notion of normal from its opposite, namely, the pathological. The word *normal*, he wrote, "uses a power as old as Aristotle to bridge the fact/value distinction, whispering in your ear that what is normal is also all right" (160). The word *normal* bears the stamp of the nineteenth century just as the concept of human nature is the hallmark of the Enlightenment, Hacking asserted: Whereas in the past we sought to discover what human nature is, we now concern ourselves with investigations that will tell us what is normal (161). He pointed out, furthermore, that although the normal stands "indifferently for what is typical, the unenthusiastic objective average, it also stands for what has been, good health, and what shall be, our chosen destiny." "That," he contended, "is why the benign and sterile-sounding word 'normal' has become one of the most powerful ideological tools of the twentieth century" (169). It has been especially noteworthy for my arguments about the biopolitical character of the subfield of bioethics that Foucault identified how the modern usage of the word *normal* evolved in a medical context (165).

These discussions about the historical and cultural contingency of the concept of the normal and its embeddedness in apparatuses of power have been vital to my arguments designed to denaturalize disability and impairment; for, once we recognize that the category of the normal is a historically and culturally specific artifact—rather than a transhistorical, objective, and universal law of nature—it becomes easier to show that the idea of disability (construed as a disadvantageous human characteristic, property, and so on) and its antecedent, impairment, too, are historically and culturally specific inventions of force relations. If the category of the normal is a historical artifact, then any phenomenon whose identity—including objects and practices that make up the identity—is established and distinguished because of its departure from and relation to that category must also be a historical artifact. Foucault's insights about the constitutive

and regulative exercise of the category of the normal have enabled me to show how a certain conception of the normal has influenced the emergence and success of the field of bioethics (and cognate areas of inquiry) and has thus been put in the service of (neo)liberal eugenics (Tremain, 2017, 2024).

Foucault as a Philosopher

Without question, Foucault's methodological insights and theoretical innovations are generally underestimated and undervalued in philosophy, though their importance is unwaveringly recognized elsewhere across the academy (Tremain, 2015c, 2017). I contend that Foucault's contributions to philosophical thinking have been underappreciated and even scorned in philosophy due, in large part, to the pervasive bias in the discipline and profession for work that uses the methodologies and approaches of "analytic" philosophy (Tremain, 2024).

To take one example: In their entry to *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (*SEP*) on models and definitions of disability, David Wasserman and Sean Aas (2022) both proudly display their bias for the work of philosophers who use analytic methodologies and approaches to study disability, while demonstrating their lack of familiarity with alternative philosophical methodologies and approaches to study of it. In particular, Wasserman and Aas discount my work in philosophy of disability (which evidently draws on Foucault) because they misunderstand Foucault's claims about the relationship between knowledge, truth, and power. (Foucault and I are the only "nonanalytic" philosophers mentioned or cited in this *SEP* entry.) In an especially awkward section of the *SEP* entry, that is, Wasserman and Aas argue that my approach to disability is no more original than Foucault's own (as they put it) "famous claim" that "knowledge is power." As seasoned readers of Foucault will recognize, however, Wasserman and Aas, insofar as they attribute to Foucault this reductive understanding of the relation between knowledge, truth, and power, have reproduced a common misinterpretation of his work. Foucault's did not conceive of the relation between knowledge, truth, and power in the way that this misinterpretation of him implies. For instance, Foucault devised the neologism power/knowledge in order to convey that power and knowledge are mutually constitutive, interactive, and reciprocal rather than (as Wasserman and Aas assert) identical and isomorphic. As Daniele Lorenzini (2022) notes, furthermore, in Foucault's late and more sophisticated reflections on the topic, he characterized the relation between these phenomena in terms of the government of subjects in relation to truth, dispensing with the term *power/knowledge* altogether.

That Wasserman and Aas did not carefully and equitably consider alternative—that is, "nonanalytic"—philosophical approaches to disability in their *SEP* entry evinces a dismissive demeanor that reinforces asymmetrical relations of power in philosophy and places undue limits on philosophical work with respect to disability. Indeed, I have used Foucault's insights to produce work in philosophy of disability that explicates the discursive violences that analytic political philosophy, ethics, bioethics, and feminist philosophy variously enact upon disabled philosophers in particular and disabled people in general, both through the arguments that analytic philosophers explicitly advance and the topics that they resolutely ignore (for example, Tremain, 2010, 2017, 2019, 2024). In the next, concluding, section of this chapter, I highlight noteworthy aspects of Foucault's work that have been sources of derision and ridicule from analytic philosophers: namely,

his historical approaches to philosophical inquiry and his social position as a gay disabled philosopher.

Upholding Foucault's History

As indicated, numerous theorists and philosophers of disability have been either overtly hostile to Foucault's work or skeptical about its suitability as a discourse with which to provide an account of disabled people's lives. Even now, that is, even though I have repeatedly shown how Foucault's claims can illuminate the situation of disabled people, some disability studies scholars and philosophers remain unconvinced about the usefulness of these claims for analyses of disability. The general charges that these authors have directed at Foucault can be summed up thus: Because Foucault disregarded personal experiences, denied the foundational subject and its agency, and obscured the body, his work is inappropriate for disability theory and philosophy of disability that ought to attend to the lived experiences and knowledges of disabled people, including their experiences and knowledges of their own embodiment (for example, Hughes and Patterson, 1997; Scully, 2008; Siebers, 2008; Hughes, 2015; Reynolds, 2022); furthermore, Foucault's genealogies offer few resources with which to articulate social critique and instigate the social change that disabled people seek (for example, Reynolds, 2022; Wasserman and Aas, 2022).

Despite the prevalence of these criticisms of Foucault in theory and philosophy of disability, however, Foucault did not abandon the subject and its experiences; rather, as I have indicated, Foucault was concerned to show that the subject and its experiences cannot be dissociated from the historical and contingent social practices that constitute the subject by and through its experiences. For Foucault, the subject's intentions and motives are by-products of apparatuses of modern power which themselves are intentional and nonsubjective. Nor did Foucault eliminate the materiality of the body; rather, Foucault was concerned to show that "the body" cannot be dissociated from the historically contingent and culturally specific practices that bring it into being, that is, bring it into being as that kind of thing: as impaired, as racialized, as material, as mechanical, as developmental, as gendered, as sexed, and so on. Indeed, Foucault's genealogies and his other historical work have provided a wealth of theoretical resources from which philosophers and theorists of disability (among others) have drawn to challenge the status quo (Tremain, 2001, 2005, 2015a, 2015c, 2017). In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Foucault explained his genealogical approach to the contingency of the subject, its materiality, and its psychology in this way:

> We believe that feelings are immutable, but every sentiment, particularly the noblest and most disinterested, has a history. We believe in the dull constancy of instinctual life and imagine that it continues to exert its force indiscriminately in the present as it did in the past ... We believe, in any event, that the body obeys the exclusive laws of physiology and that it escapes the influence of history, but this too is false. (Foucault, 1977b, 153)

I began the preface to *Foucault and Feminist Philosophy of Disability* (2017) with a personal anecdote in which I describe an especially heartbreaking incident of ableism

that I encountered early in my career in philosophy. Throughout the book, furthermore, I used first-person pronouns to introduce and explain my claims. I did not, however, articulate autobiographical narratives over the course of the book to advance or justify these claims. Does the absence of personal narrative in my book render its analyses ineffective and incomplete? Should it thus be said that I denied subjectivity and agency as general categories in the book and my own subjectivity and agency in particular? Did I deny my subjective experiences of ableism because they are not elaborated throughout the book? On the contrary, I want to argue that I emulated what Foucault did in his own work, that is, I produced critical genealogical analyses that my subjective experiences had motivated.

"Each of my works is a part of my own biography," Foucault (1988, 11) stated in an interview that appears under the title "Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault." In another interview, Foucault (2000, 244) remarked, "I haven't written a single book that was not inspired, at least in part, by a direct personal experience." In yet another interview, Foucault—himself a gay man who was repeatedly psychiatrized; participated in public acts of resistance with disabled people, prisoners, and other marginalized social groups; confronted the rampant homophobia of philosophy in the mid-twentieth century; and died from complications of AIDS at a historical moment when fear and avoidance were the predominant social responses to a positive diagnosis—explained the impetus for his writing in this way:

> Whenever I have tried to carry out a piece of theoretical work, it has been on the basis of my own experience, always in relation to processes I saw taking place around me. It is because I thought I could recognize in the things I saw, in the institutions with which I dealt, in my relations with others, cracks, silent shocks, malfunctionings…that I understand a particular piece of work, a few fragments of autobiography. (Foucault, 1990, 156)

Foucault lived his last years during a time when HIV-positive people and people living with AIDS—spurred on by groups such as Gay Men's Health Crisis-GMHC (created in the United States in 1982), Vaincre le sida (created in France in 1983), AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power-ACT UP (created in the United States in 1987), and AIDS Action Now! (created in Canada in 1988)—sought public policy and legislative recognition as "people with disabilities" to gain access to the social services and health-care resources that they needed. Given Foucault's activism and the constant attention that he accorded to subjugated knowledges, he and his work likely promoted these efforts. Indeed, AIDES, the largest HIV/AIDS organization in France was created in 1984, shortly after Foucault's death, by his partner (and beneficiary) Daniel Defert.

Should we regard Foucault as an early standpoint theorist? In Foucault's writings (and in my own), subjective experience is generative of critical authorial practices, anticipating Tina Fernandes Botts's claims about the crucial nature of this complementarity for responsible scholarship on socially embedded problems (Botts, 2018). In short, both the dismissal of Foucault's work and the refusal to genuinely engage with the writing of philosophers of disability who use it impose conceptual, discursive, and political limits on philosophy of disability and reinforce the continued marginalization of oppositional work on disability within the field of philosophy itself,

ultimately disadvantaging disabled philosophers themselves. A great deal of Foucault's work constitutes significant attempts to challenge the self-evidence of assumptions about disability by persuasively exposing the historical and cultural specificity and contingency of normality and its cognates, the abnormal and the pathological. Indeed, Foucault's problematizations of (ab)normality, deviance, perversion, pathology, sexuality, race, discipline, and madness were trail-blazing and suggest innumerable avenues of investigation along which future (feminist) philosophy of disability can and should proceed. Hence, the enduring and iconoclastic importance of Foucault.

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