When Moral Responsibility Theory Met My Philosophy of Disability

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Abstract

In this article, I aim to demonstrate that moral responsibility theory produces, legitimates, and even magnifies the considerable social injustice that accrues to disabled people insofar as it implicitly and explicitly promotes a depoliticized ontology of disability that construes disability as a naturally disadvantageous personal characteristic or deleterious property of individuals rather than identifies it as an effect of power, an apparatus. In particular, I argue that the ways in which philosophers of moral responsibility theory employ the methodological tools of "analytic" philosophy to establish the philosophical domain in which they engage have distinctly detrimental effects on disabled people.

Introduction

This article contributes to growing discussions within philosophy about the ways in which and the extent to which philosophy and indeed philosophers are culpable with respect to the production and perpetuation of unjust social, economic, and political arrangements. A central motivational assumption of the article is that moral responsibility theory produces, legitimates, and even magnifies the considerable injustice that accrues to disabled people insofar as it implicitly and explicitly promotes a depoliticized ontology of disability that actively materializes disability as a naturally disadvantageous personal characteristic or deleterious property of individuals rather than interrogates it as an effect of power, an apparatus. One aim of the article is thus to articulate a transformative social ontology of disability that would counter the prevailing claims about disability that moral responsibility theory advances: a social ontology of disability designed to impel the cultural, economic, institutional, philosophical, and political change required to transform the current social situation of disabled people that the prevailing naturalized conception of disability fosters and reinforces. In this regard, the article reprises and expands my call for a conceptual revolution with respect to how philosophers understand the metaphysics of disability (Tremain 2017a); that is, the argument of the article calls for a conceptual revolution with respect to how philosophers research, write, and teach about the elements that constitute the ontology and ontological status of disability. Furthermore, the argument beckons a conceptual uprising with respect to how their philosophical claims about disability should be positioned in relation to the fields of social ontology and responsibility theory themselves. The article is designed in part to show that the ways in which philosophers of moral responsibility theory employ the methodological tools of analytic philosophy to establish the philosophical domain in which they engage have distinctly detrimental effects on disabled people.

Say Goodbye to Moral Responsibility Theory as You Know It

Traditionally, philosophers who work in the area of moral responsibility theory (e.g., Broad 1934; van Inwagen 1983) have disregarded the role that systemic and structural relations of power play in moral decision making, failing to recognize the constitutive nature of these relations of power and offering an analysis of responsibility that purportedly stands apart from them (Ciurria 2021; 2022). These philosophers have instead been variously preoccupied with debates about freedom and determinism in the context of individual agency and with juridical representations of power that construe the relation between power and moral decision making in terms of negative liberty and duties, that is, construe power in (neo)liberal terms as a repressive entity that subtracts from a given subject's agency. Kayla Wiebe and Amy Mullin's recent article on relational autonomy and the "decision making" of poor disabled people in Canada who use MAiD (medically assisted suicide) to end their social suffering extends this tradition and its failure to examine the productive constraints of biopolitics for the constitution of subjectivities under neoliberalism (see Wiebe and Mullin 2023; Tremain 2023, 2024).

A more astute and up-to-date philosophical approach to responsibility would embed moral decision making and its constitutive effects within matrixes of power, whilst conceiving the power relations that condition decision making practices as generative rather than prohibitive (as liberal political theory typically casts them): relations of power produce discursive objects; candidates for truth and falsehood according to which subjects act; the historical conditions of possibility within which subjects may choose; philosophical positions; and socially situated subjects, that is, subjectivities and identities. Despite the universalism that traditional (analytic) moral responsibility theory presupposes, relations of power produce a diversity of subject positions to which moral responsibility is differentially attributed and distributed. In other words, relations of power have always already put in place the possible options from which diverse subjects may choose to act and the disparate degrees to which they will be rendered responsible for their actions and alleged actions (Tremain 2006, 2010, 2017a).

Mich Ciurria has argued for a critical approach to responsibility that both underscores its political construction "as a system of practices that enforce hierarchies of power" and examines the structural injustices that the concept of responsibility itself enables and portends. Hence, Ciurria's work on responsibility draws attention to "the connections between responsibility and contemporary apparatuses of power," apparatuses that, for example, racialize certain social groups–especially Black and Indigenous people–"as criminal and deviant," while revering other social groups–in particular, white people–"as presumptively praiseworthy, honest, and forgivable" (Ciurria 2021, 168). Ciurria points out that current responsibility practices, rather than manifestations of a universal and transhistorical inherent human property of individual subjects, evince a relatively recent phenomenon. She notes, for instance, that most theorists of responsibility believe that traditional Indigenous societies distributed responsibility much more equitably: these traditional societies constituted highly egalitarian political systems in which the maintenance of relationships was crucial to the survival of both the individual and the group.

Indeed, as Dianne Biin and co-authors Deborah Canada, John Chenoweth, and Lou-ann Neel explain, Indigenous ethical teaching begins in infancy through the practice of storytelling. It is storytelling (rather than appeal to decontextualized duties and principles) that "is used to guide behaviour and solidify belonging and responsibility to the family, community, and larger world," they say (Binn et al.). Through stories," Biin and co-authors point out, "a child develops identity and learns about moral responsibility" (ibid.) It is "through stories," they also note, that "the community articulates and embraces its shared valued system" and, thus, as they point out, "ethical thinking emerges from a community's customs, teachings, and ideals" (ibid.). In *Seven Sacred Teachings: Niizhwaaswi Gagiikwewin* (2010) David Bouchard and Joseph Martin write, furthermore, that Indigenous teachings involve notions of mutual care, collective decision making, and sustainability. Together with storytelling, these teachings shape Indigenous notions of responsibility and respect for the land, water, air, and sky, as well as all their inhabitants.

Says Ciurria: The distinctly oppressive nature of responsibility in the liberal west is a fairly recent invention. Ciurria's approach to moral responsibility theory assumes that "responsibility practices [of the liberal west are] oppressive social techniques that can only be changed through social engineering. They are not ahistorical evolutionary impulses" (Ciurria 2021, 169). Although Ciurria allows that blame and praise often seem to be instinctive and reflexive responses to given states of affairs, she attributes the apparent transparency and seeming impulsive nature of these responses to the pervasiveness of apparatuses of power that shape social interactions at present. Ciurria argues that "the responsibility system" of the liberal west–and the judgments, expectations, and attitudes that it comprises–"enforces and upholds the asymmetric and oppressive terms of the domination contract" (179), ensuring that socially privileged people remain in their positions of privilege and domination. In short, culturally dominant responsibility practices (and the biased ontological assumptions upon which they rely and reproduce) constitute a mechanism of social power that reinstates systemic and structural injustices.

Many philosophers espouse arguments that purport to sever the causal connections between the pernicious conception of disability that currently prevails in philosophy, the oppressive responsibility practices that ensue from this grievous conception, and the social, economic, and political structures and practices whose production this conception reinforces, effectively obfuscating these structures and practices while naturalizing their consequences. For example, although a number of philosophers argue that there is a "moral duty" to practice "procreative beneficence" and thus produce the genetically "best" offspring, they adamantly deny that their convictions about responsibility for the elimination of prospective disabled people thereby provide rationale for authorities to limit the resources–namely, with respect to education, income, health care, employment, housing, and so on–available to already existing disabled people (e.g., Savulescu 2001; Savulescu, ter Muelen, and Kahane 2011; Anomaly and Johnson 2023; cf. Hall 2016). These philosophers would, furthermore, dismiss the suggestion that their philosophical assumptions and arguments about the best children are co-constitutive with their perceptions of disabled philosophers as potential colleagues and thus have implications for the demographic constitution of professional philosophy itself.

Yet we should regard the rebuttals that philosophers elaborate in these respects as forms of structural gaslighting that cover over the historical conditions of possibility for the construction and perception of disabled people as defective from which this putative (eugenic) duty and the economic and other inequities that consequently accrue to disabled people derive. Nora Berenstain has introduced the term *structural gaslighting* to refer to "any conceptual work that functions to obscure the nonaccidental connections between structures of oppression and the patterns of harm that they produce and license" (Berenstain, 2020, 734). As Berenstain explains it, for example, white feminist philosophers enact structural gaslighting when they invoke epistemologies and ideologies of domination that actively and routinely disappear and obscure the actual causes, mechanisms, and effects of oppression in ways that undermine the efforts and advancement of Black women, women of colour, and other minoritized women. My argument is that the practices of structural gaslighting, according to which there is no causal connection between the conception of disability as a natural misfortune and the inequities and injustice that disabled people confront–that, in other words, philosophers who advance the prevailing (mis)conception of disability as a defect of individuals bear no culpability for the social exclusion and disenfranchisement of disabled people as a group–are strategic elements of what I call "the apparatus of disability" (Tremain 2017a, 2020a).

The conception of disability that prevails in moral responsibility theory and philosophy in general construes disability as a philosophically uninteresting and value-neutral biological trait, that is, a prediscursive entity, with transhistorical and transcultural properties that medicine and science can astutely recognize and represent in ways that promote the prescribed correction or elimination of the entity. For example, P.F. Strawson, whose claims redefined responsibility as a social practice of exchange between moral agents, uncritically presupposed this conception of disability insofar as he argued that people who are "neurotic," "warped or deranged," "schizophrenic," "compulsive," "insane," or "delusional" are not members of the moral community, that is, should not be regarded as moral agents who participate in the relationships that characterize responsibility practices (Strawson 1963, in Ciurria 2023, 36-37, 45). In Strawson, in other words, the parameters of the moral domain are delineated and secured through the exclusion of disabled people.

Even philosophers of moral responsibility who recognize that relations of social power–and, indeed, structural injustice–condition attributions of responsibility, unquestioningly invoke naturalized and individualized constructions of disability in order to thereby circumscribe a moral landscape and a set of morally relevant agents. For example, in their introduction to a collection on "the social dimensions of moral responsibility," Katrina Hutchison, Catriona Mackenzie, and Marina Oshana assume an essentialist ontology of disability, according to which disability is a self-evidently natural and deleterious characteristic (difference, attribute, or property) that some people embody or possess, in order to argue thus: "individuals whose capacities are intact may be (incorrectly) judged to lack the relevant capacities due to their social situation. Others' assessments of the moral agency of an individual might track social identity rather than capacity" (Hutchison, Mackenzie, and Oshana 2018, 8). For Hutchison and co-authors (as for Strawson and other philosophers of moral responsibility), the construction of certain modes of existence as idealized "capacities" is not itself a technology of power; nor are prevalent perceptions of these so-called relevant capacities (and "lack" thereof) instruments of social power; these perceptions of one's ostensibly natural capacities are not constitutive of one's social identity and situation; nor, furthermore, are these allegedly natural capacities contingently constructed products and effects of this situation. Thus, these authors assume (like Strawson) that they can use their distinction, that is, use their "capacity criterion" (Jenkins 2024) to determine who should be included in accounts of moral responsibility and who should be excluded. As Stephanie Jenkins convincingly argues, philosophical claims and theories that assume such criteria in order to determine which beings deserve full moral consideration are both ableist and speciesist, providing rationale (and rationalization) for the mistreatment and disregard of both disabled humans and nonhuman animals.

My call for a conceptual revolution with respect to the ontology of disability that gets employed in philosophical analyses of responsibility (and metaphilosophical analyses of responsibility theory) will be surprising to most philosophers and odd to many of them. In particular, philosophers who assume an ontology according to which disability is a prediscursive, human attribute, characteristic, difference, or property take for granted that the emerging field of social ontology–which is dominated by analytic metaphysics of gender and race–by definition, does not encompass disability and its conceptual objects. Disability, they surmise, is neither, say, a social practice, nor is it a social fact, nor do the people who embody or possess this allegedly prediscursive characteristic or property of disability–i.e., "people with disabilities"–constitute a social group, though they may, these philosophers imply, constitute some sort of natural composite under the rubric of medico-scientific diagnoses. These philosophers assume, furthermore, that since the ontological status of disability is neither established nor constituted through sociality, they need not study it as such. Hence, although sex, gender, race, sexuality, class, and other subjecting markers are increasingly regarded in philosophical circles as intriguing social kinds rather than morally arbitrary natural kinds, as provocative socially constructed categories rather than mundane necessary designations, and as contingent circumstances rather than determined outcomes, (the apparatus of) disability rarely receives the compliment of critical attention from philosophers that a social constructionist thesis about its ontology would afford (see, for example, Epstein 2018).

As with the naturalization in philosophy of the subjecting apparatuses of race, gender, age, and sexuality (among others), so, too, however, with the naturalization of disability in philosophy: the naturalization of these apparatuses in philosophy constitutes structural gaslighting. As technologies of structural gaslighting, the epistemologies and ontologies of domination assumed in moral responsibility theory that persistently naturalize disability are, I contend, among the historical conditions of possibility for the ongoing reconstitution of disabled people as defective, unreliable, and suboptimal, and thus not viable colleagues in philosophy. In other words, structural gaslighting is a strategic mechanism of the apparatus of disability that obscures the systemic and structural character of ableism in philosophy, making it difficult for disabled philosophers to both recognize the intentional and nonsubjective nature of their struggles within philosophy and identify the discipline and profession of philosophy themselves as culpable for the structural injustice that produces these difficulties. In short, these technologies of gaslighting–these epistemologies and ontologies of domination–repeatedly sabotage most attempts to improve the professional situation and position of disabled philosophers and, in addition, have material, political, and economic implications for disabled people in society at large (Tremain 2020a).

The assumption that disability is a natural category or kind and not properly studied in the subfields of social ontology and moral responsibility theory has implications for the shape and direction of these subfields and for the shape and direction of the discipline of philosophy more generally. Inasmuch as philosophers think that critical examination of disability is not pertinent to research and teaching in social metaphysics and responsibility theory, critical philosophical work about disability is seldom included in potentially relevant conference rosters; nor is this work on disability commissioned for edited collections about subjects related to social metaphysics or moral responsibility; nor, furthermore, is it cited in bibliographies of publications on topics in these areas of inquiry. Rather, philosophers remain resolute that they appropriately and adequately address disability in the subfield of bioethics and cognate fields of inquiry. In these domains of inquiry, too, however, the prevailing philosophical understanding of disability as a universally disadvantageous personal characteristic that should be managed in some way persists largely unquestioned and uncritically accepted; indeed, the simultaneous creation and elimination of disability as a deleterious characteristic of individuals are, I maintain, the desiderata of bioethics and its cognates.

A different understanding of disability holds that the ontology of disability, the ontological status of disability, and the so-called application of philosophical principles and theoretical frameworks to the phenomena of disability are mutually constitutive and mutually reinforcing, entangled, and entwined. On this understanding of disability, the ontology of disability is always already a social, value-laden, and contingent state of affairs, a historically specific event. Notice that this historicized understanding of disability suggests an argument according to which the distinction between theoretical philosophy and applied philosophy–a constitutive distinction that structures and constrains the prevailing conception of disability–is an artifact and mechanism of philosophical discourse that enables the naturalization and sedimentation of contingent phenomena, including the naturalization of disability and the conceptual objects that it comprises. Hence, the singular importance of an article about the naturalization and materialization of disability–that is, the social ontology of disability–for a scholarly collection devoted to feminist approaches to political and moral responsibility. Notice that chipping away at the naturalization and substantiation of disability in this way invariably reveals that the term *social ontology* is redundant because, like disability, race, money, laws, responsibility, baptisms, and so on, the significance attributed to ontology is already a socially saturated product with a certain contingent and situated history that can be traced genealogically.

Philosophical work (such as mine) that understands disability as an apparatus of power–that is, as a heterogeneous aggregate of discourses, laws, institutions, statements, and practices–rather than as a prediscursive and ahistorical, personal characteristic, difference, or property falls squarely within the philosophical realm and practice of social ontology in ways that shift how responsibility is deployed. In other contexts, I draw on Michel Foucault’s technique of genealogy and ideas about the productive character of (bio)power to explain how disability and its allegedly prediscursive foundation, impairment, have been intentionally and nonsubjectively materialized and naturalized in (for example) public policy, administrative practices, genetic technologies, and various subfields of philosophy–including bioethics, philosophy of mind, feminist philosophy, and political philosophy–in ways that advance certain ableist agendas and achieve distinct eugenic goals (Tremain 2006, 2010, 2015, 2017a, 2019).

The representation within bioethics (as well as cognitive science and cognate fields) of disability as an inherently disadvantageous personal characteristic and the intentional and nonsubjective relations of power co-constitutive with this representation–according to which responses to the problem of disability are thereby individualized and medicalized as prevention, cure, institutionalization, and elimination–contribute considerably to the antagonistic environment that disabled philosophers confront in philosophy, reproducing our exclusion from the profession and the marginalization of our critical philosophical work on disability from the discipline. Indeed, bioethics operates as an area of philosophy whose guiding assumptions and discursive practices run directly counter to both the identification of disability as an apparatus of power (rather than a property of subjects) and the claim that disabled philosophers who take this approach to disability are credible philosophers and worthy colleagues (rather than merely “troublemakers”). In short, disabled philosophers of disability confront a wave of epistemic oppression and ridicule if they criticize bioethics too loudly, especially if they do so in ways that (1) contest the consolidation and status of the subfield itself in order to expose its eugenic impetus and gatekeeping; and (2) interrogate how the subfield is grounded in and revolves around constructions of personal responsibility, autonomy, and self-determination that implicate it in neoliberal social and economic projects (Tremain 2006, 2010 2017a, 2024; Hall 2016, 2021; Ciurria 2023). Such practices of structural epistemic injustice and personalized scorn underwrite concealment of the eugenic violence that the ontological assumptions presupposed in predominant forms of moral responsibility theory facilitate.

No Method Is Neutral

The artifactual division between two methodological approaches of philosophy–namely, (so-called) analytic philosophy and (so-called) continental philosophy–and the artificial elevation of the former have enabled the naturalization and individualization of disability in moral responsibility theory to persist and, in addition, contribute to and reinforce asymmetrical relations of power in philosophy more generally. The examples from responsibility theory that I have supplied thus far constitute only the tip of the iceberg. Hence, I want to expand my discussion of the ways in which philosophers have employed the methodological tools of analytic philosophy to cultivate their style of philosophical practice and delineate the domain in which (their) philosophical discourse will circulate, indicating the distinctly detrimental effects of these tools on disabled people by doing so. In this section, therefore, I offer an account of Tina Fernandes Botts's examination of the differences between these two approaches in order to identify the deleterious character of the analytic philosopher's method. In the next section, I demonstrate how Botts's arguments can be used to illuminate the naturalization, materialization, and individualization of the apparatus of disability in analytic philosophy and analytic philosophy of disability.

Within both the discipline and profession of philosophy, the precise nature of the differences between the two methodological approaches has been a hotly contested matter and source of controversy for quite some time, in part because these approaches embody disparate institutional positions with respect to status and prestige. While analytic philosophy continues to be central to the discipline and analytic philosophers continue to be esteemed in the profession–as evidenced by (among other things) the book lists of the most prominent academic publishers, faculty rosters of the most prestigious departments, placement records of these departments, and content of the most highly-ranked journals, new materialists, Foucault scholars, critical phenomenologists, existentialists, and everyone else who gets lumped under the banner of "continental philosophy" remain subordinated and marginalized within the discipline and profession, widely perceived by many, if not most, analytic philosophers as less rigorous, less serious, and not really "philosophical" at all. Although these "continental" philosophers ignore the ideas and arguments of analytic philosophers at their peril due to the centrality of analytic philosophical discourse to the tradition, discipline, and current profession of philosophy, many analytic philosophers themselves are, alternatively, uninformed about the main historical figures of so-called continental philosophy and unfamiliar with the work that their colleagues who draw on authors, ideas, and arguments in the aforementioned areas produce.

For example, in their entry to *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (*SEP*) on models and definitions of disability, David Wasserman and Sean Aas (2022) proudly display their bias for the work of analytic philosophers of disability, while demonstrating their lack of familiarity with alternative philosophical approaches to disability. In particular, Wasserman and Aas discount my work in philosophy of disability on the basis of their misunderstanding of Foucault's claims about the relationship between knowledge, truth, and power. (Foucault and I are the only non-analytic philosophers mentioned or cited in this *SEP* entry.) In an especially awkward section of the *SEP* entry, that is, these authors argue that my approach to disability, which draws on Foucault, 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 understanding of the relation between knowledge, truth, and power was far more complex and complicated than this misinterpretation of him implies. For instance, Foucault's use of the neologism *power/knowledge* was designed to assert that power and knowledge are mutually constitutive and reciprocal rather than identical and isomorphic, as Wasserman and Aas indicate. As Daniele Lorenzini (2023) notes, furthermore, in Foucault's subsequent 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.

Ultimately, Wasserman and Aas, in order to dismiss my description of the apparatus of disability, invoke the "reliability of the commonsense judgments and linguistic intuitions appealed to by rival analytic definitions" of the concept of disability (Wasserman and Aas 2022). Yet as Robin Dembroff–one of a growing number of "analytic" feminist philosophers who themselves critique the oppressive and hostile character of the methodology and culture of analytic philosophy–has asked: "Whose commonsense constitutes philosophically legitimate commonsense? Whose pretheoretical concepts and terms constrain philosophical inquiry? And whose intuitions are philosophical intuitions?" (Dembroff 2020, 403; see also Haslanger 2017; Rodier and Brennan, 2024). That Wasserman and Aas did not equitably consider alternative–i.e., "non-analytic"–philosophical approaches to disability in their *SEP* entry evinces a dismissive demeanor that contributes to asymmetrical relations of power in philosophy and places undue limits on philosophical work with respect to disability. As Botts (2018) writes,

> in general, the culture of analytic philosophy is hostile to women, persons of color, persons with disabilities, persons with non-binary gender identities, persons from underprivileged upbringings and backgrounds, those working on philosophical questions outside of a very narrow list of what are considered acceptable or philosophically reputable areas of specialization, and continental philosophy in general. This well-known hostility has created an environment in which those other than straight, white, able-bodied, cis-gender, economically secure males who work in a few narrow areas of philosophy are marginalized and excluded from the conversations, institutions, professional conferences, and power structures that constitute the philosophical mainstream. Since it is philosophers from these marginalized and excluded populations who usually work on philosophical questions dealing with race, gender, disability, and sexuality, … these sorts of philosophical questions are also, in the main, excluded from the philosophical mainstream (and simultaneously from mainstream respect). (Botts 2018, 57-58)

Botts maintains that lack of familiarity with the work of continental philosophers and thus failure to draw upon the insights of continental philosophy, as well as an "almost exclusive reliance on certain traditionally analytic methods" (Botts 2018 55) are among the reasons why an unsubstantiated and otherwise problematic article that was published in a leading peer-reviewed feminist philosophy journal formulates unwarranted analogies between race and transgender. Botts allows that the methodology of the article "meets the standards of professional research from the analytic perspective" (ibid.); she argues, however, that the lack of attention to historical and social context, which typifies the methodology of the analytic approach to philosophy, is in fact a central problem of the article, that is, the disregard for historical and social context that typifies the analytic approach to philosophy renders the approach (and thus the article in question) inadequate for critical philosophical inquiry about subjecting social categories such as race and gender. As Botts explains it, "Methodological tools for doing philosophy that take into account the historical context of the phenomenon under consideration (such as are often used in the continental tradition) are arguably better suited for examining questions of race and gender than acontextual or ahistorical methodological tools (such as are often used …in the analytic tradition)" (51). For Botts, the methodologies of continental philosophy facilitate a more complete approach to the study of race and gender than the methodologies of analytic philosophy alone typically provide because the former methodologies take account of the historical emergence and vicissitudes of social and political phenomena such as race, gender, material inequalities, and legacies of structural oppressions, as well as the ways in which these social and political phenomena shape the experiences of the people subjected to them and are shaped by these experiences. As she puts it, texts that can be situated squarely in the continental tradition generally embody a strong historical consciousness that precludes consideration of them without reference to some historical context. Indeed, Botts suggests that this claim about the indispensability of historical context can, arguably, be extrapolated to objects of philosophical contemplation in general, in addition to its incorporation into analyses of social categories such as race, transgender, impairment, and class or apparatuses of social power such as racism, cisgender, ableism, or classism (60-61).

To advance these claims according to which the methodologies of analytic philosophy render the approach insufficient and even unsuitable for critical philosophical work on race, racism, and other social phenomena, Botts draws upon the work of Hans-Johann Glock who, in his *What is Analytic Philosophy?* (2008), endeavoured to identify and elaborate the methodological interconnections between distinctive sub-traditions of analytic philosophy. The first candidate that Glock identified as a key feature of the method(s) of analytic philosophy is the "decomposition of complex phenomena into simpler constituents" (Glock 2008, 154, in Botts 2018, 56). As Botts notes, the "decompositional project" (to use Glock's term) was the crux of the work of the logical atomists such as G.E. Moore who, in the words of Glock, "tried to define complex concepts in terms of simpler ones, up to the point at which one […] reached indefinable simple notions like goodness" (Botts 2018 56). The second candidate that Glock noted as a key feature of analytic methods is the "scientific spirit," with, in Botts's words, "its detached repose and attempts at objectivity" (57). The third candidate for a distinctly analytic approach to philosophy that Glock identified is the use of puzzle cases and thought experiments. The fourth candidate for a key feature of analytic methodology, according to Glock, is that the approach proceeds in a "piecemeal and tentative" fashion, operating "step by step" (Glock 2008, 164-168, in Botts 2018, 57). Botts writes, furthermore, that Glock regarded the focus on clarity as an additional well-established candidate for what could count as a distinctive feature of the analytic method (Glock 2008, 168, in Botts 2018, 57). A preoccupation with reason and rationality is another hallmark feature of analytic methods that Glock pointed out, Botts notes (Glock, 2008, 174, in Botts 2018, 57).

Botts maintains that all the features that Glock identified as characteristic elements of analytic philosophical methods are emblematic of an approach to inquiry that is both decontextualized and does not account for the concrete lived experiences of actual people. As Botts explains it, the decomposition of complex topics into simpler components relies upon the assumption that these simpler components can be adequately addressed in a vacuum. The "scientific spirit," Botts argues, is also removed from context, rendering appeal to lived experience as "unprofessional" and "irrelevant," if not an obstruction to objective truth and knowledge. In this regard, Botts points out, furthermore, that "continental" thinkers deride the preoccupation with reason in the analytic tradition insofar as it "entails a hubris about the human capacity for objectivity that is responsible for much harm done in the world, including the effects of fascism, genocide, silencing, and (primarily epistemic) oppression of many other sorts and varieties" (Botts 2018, 57).

Botts argues that although the scientific quest for objectivity, the veneration of reason, the emphasis given to clarity, and the attention paid to other features traditionally associated with the best analytic method enable the production of good work on certain topics, these very features, unless supplemented with methodological tools that embrace lived experience, are not helpful and can be quite harmful when they are employed to examine non-ideal social or other philosophical problems that concern race and racism in the United States. As Botts puts it, "when it comes to addressing socially embedded philosophical problems responsibly, help is arguably needed from the continental tradition in order to make real progress toward getting the answers right" (Botts 2018, 55). Botts wants us to recognize that different philosophical methods are required to suitably address diverse types of problems. As she states, therefore, "there is no one true philosophical method that is suited to addressing all of the varied and complex questions with which the discipline of philosophy is concerned" (56). Rather, as Botts explains it, philosophical approaches to race and racism should "weave together" analytic and continental methodological tools or should otherwise operate between the two traditions by, for instance, employing careful reasoning while incorporating lived experiences.

My argument is that philosophers of disability should follow Botts's recommendations with respect to the directions of their future work in the area. Indeed, features of the methodology of analytic philosophy that, according to Botts, render it inadequate for work in critical philosophical work on race and racism can likewise be recognized in analytic philosophy of disability, as Wasserman and Aas's remarks indicate. These features of analytic philosophy, I submit, render it inadequate and unsuitable for the articulation of a conception of disability and social ontology of disability that aim to hasten the radical structural and institutional change required to significantly transform the circumstances of disabled people's lives. Although philosophy of disability that utilizes the methodologies of analytic philosophy is apparently designed to improve understanding of disability within philosophy and society more generally, the methodological tools of analytic philosophy, the ontological commitments that work in analytic philosophy of disability makes, and the understanding of power as repressive that analytic philosophy of disability generally assumes greatly restrict the change that the exclusive use of these methodological devices could provoke.

In what follows, I draw on Botts's critical remarks about inquiry into race and racism that uses the methodological tools of analytic philosophy in order to further argue that these tools depoliticize and decontextualize philosophy of disability and hence cannot deliver a robust account of the historicist and performative relations of social power that constitute the apparatus of disability. In addition, I build upon my discussion of the ableist exclusions embedded in prominent (analytic) responsibility theory to indicate how the methodological tools of analytic philosophy contribute in unique ways to the social harms that the apparatus of disability comprises and generates. The analytic philosopher's penchant for conceptual distinctions is a good point from which to continue this discussion. As I have indicated, analytic philosophers of moral responsibility, in order to carve out the domain of ethics, institutionalize the naturalization and individualization of disability by distinguishing what is prediscursive, natural, biologically determined, philosophically uninteresting, and politically neutral (and hence not morally praiseworthy or blameworthy), on one side, from what is the product of individual action, human agency, and contingent (i.e., for which one may be culpable, held responsible, or deemed blameworthy), on the other side. As I have indicated, furthermore, analytic philosophers of responsibility subsume the phenomena that (the apparatus of) disability comprises under the rubric of the former and, in doing so, have found justification to dehumanize and disenfranchise disabled people, thereby excluding them from their philosophical frameworks.

Disability and Method, Naturally

Consider an additional example of the problem, one that exemplifies how the distinction is often used as the groundwork for an argument. In Sukaina Hirji's article "Oppressive Double Binds," that is, they provide a vivid example of the use of this distinction as a motivational, i.e., foundational, assumption to both structure and illustrate a philosophical argument about dilemmas–that is, double binds–of decision making that members of marginalized groups confront. As Hirji explains it, the "central feature of double binds…is that an agent's own prudential good is bound up with their ability to resist oppression; double binds are choice situations where no matter what an agent does, they become a mechanism in their own oppression" (Hirji 2021, 643). Double binds, Hirji writes, "constrain an individual's agency while leaving various dimensions of their autonomy fully intact" (ibid.). Given this explanation of oppressive double binds, the apparatus of disability is first naturalized and individualized in Section II of Hirji's article in order to distinguish what constitutes a politically relevant double bind from what is not politically significant. In the context of this distinction, that is, Hirji (in ways reminiscent of Strawson) uncritically accepts the psychiatric diagnosis of "schizophrenia" as a prediscursive, transhistorical, and politically neutral scientific category and hence deems so-called schizophrenic symptoms as irrelevant to oppressive double binds, that is, irrelevant to social power relations. In another place in Hirji's article, they naturalize and medicalize the apparatus of disability in this way by distinguishing "forms of pathological behaviour" (659) from other phenomena that philosophers readily associate with social power relations: namely, coercion and manipulation. In both contexts, this theoretical move–that is, Hirji's naturalization, medicalization, and individualization of disability–operates as a form of structural gaslighting that obscures the political character of elements of the apparatus of disability that they claim are politically neutral, prior to culture, biologically determined, and universal.

The very bases on which Hirji excludes psychiatrized people from consideration–namely, diagnosis and "symptoms" of pathology–in fact breed a variety of oppressive double binds with which many disabled, racialized, and other marginalized people must grapple: although obtaining a diagnosis of "schizophrenia" may enable one to access some social services and health care, doing so may compel one to subordinate (say) one's experiences of sexual and other trauma and violence in the service of a naturalized and medicalized understanding of one's situation and thereby vulnerabilize (Tremain 2020a, 2021) oneself, that is, render oneself vulnerable to duress with respect to institutionalization, pharmaceutical intervention, and so on; likewise, although interpreting one's behaviour as "symptoms" of an authoritatively recognizable pathology may enable one to access some social services and health care, doing so affirms prevailing beliefs and values about (so-called) normal behaviour and cognition in ways that heighten the degree to which one may be disciplined and subjected to surveillance by social workers, medical personnel, government administrators, and the police; and while obtaining a diagnosis may enable one to more readily find communities of psychiatric survivors and other disabled people with whom to identify and from whom to receive emotional and social support, doing so may render one less likely to find stable employment and housing due to prevalent fears and misconceptions about people who have been psychiatrized, increasing the likelihood that one will experience poverty, food insecurity, and homelessness.

Indeed, the politically potent nature of the aforementioned phenomena has been amply elaborated through the perspectives and insights articulated in expanding bodies of research and testimony in philosophy of disability, mad studies, mad activism, and discrit studies. Many of these perspectives and insights challenge the designation of *schizophrenia* and psychiatric classifications more generally, identifying them as medicalizing, essentializing, and, yes, oppressive, especially with respect to disabled, racialized, trans, incarcerated, and poor populations (which are by no means mutually exclusive groups). In *Mad World: The Politics of Mental Health*, for instance, Micha Frazer-Carroll addresses the political character of double binds with respect to madness, though not in this particular way (Frazer-Carroll 2023; also Chapman 2024; Jeppson 2024; Garson 2022). Both the distinction on which Hirji's argument relies and the ensuing argument itself imply that the sort of dilemmas with which Frazer-Carroll is concerned should be regarded as natural phenomena to which analyses of coercion, manipulation, and power do not apply. Thus, I want to underscore that when feminist and other oppositional philosophers employ ableist criteria and strategies of the apparatus of disability to carve out a theoretical domain in which to adjudicate claims about power and oppression (as Hirji and Hutchison and co-authors do), they produce theories that push a range of oppressed people beyond the scope of social justice, further marginalizing and conceptually and materially disempowering them, as well as re-establishing moral responsibility theory and philosophy in general as an elitist, ableist, sanist, racist, transphobic, and carceral endeavour.

Elizabeth Barnes's (2016, 7, 54-77) assertion according to which disability is a "mere" difference rather than a "bad" difference is one of the "rival analytic definitions" of disability that Wasserman and Aas characterize as commonsensical and intuitive in order to set it against my representation of disability as an apparatus of power. Barnes's book, *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability* (2016), has gained notoriety as the first monograph published in analytic philosophy of disability. In the remainder of this section, therefore, I explain the limitations of analytic philosophy for examination of the apparatus of disability and its naturalization in philosophy by considering the theory of disability that Barnes has outlined. I argue that Barnes's theory falls prey to drawbacks of analytic methodology that both Glock and Botts have identified. Barnes's philosophical work on disability, I maintain, has too much in common with the naturalized conception of disability that prevails in philosophy to be regarded as a serious candidate for a social ontology of disability that will instigate the political, economic, and institutional change for disabled people that a transformative, anti-ableist, anti-racist, and anti-carceral social justice demands. In short, I maintain that Barnes's work on disability and the work on disability that other analytic philosophers of disability (such as Wasserman and Aas) produce at present have enabled the naturalization of the apparatus of disability in philosophy to persist. Most of the book's arguments and claims about disability as a "mere difference"–which are confined to what Barnes calls "physical disability"–exemplify the problems that, as Botts has pointed out, arise when the idealized methodology of analytic philosophy is employed in the context of non-ideal philosophy about social categories and other social phenomena.

The conceptual analysis that Barnes articulates in the opening chapters of *The Minority Body* and at various places throughout the book is decontextualized, a feature that Botts points out is typical of work that proceeds in what Glock refers to as "the scientific spirit" of analytic philosophy; that is, the analytical framework of disability that Barnes develops in the opening chapters of her book seeks an objective basis for identification of disability that disregards questions about the historical emergence of the category of disability and its conceptual objects and pays no critical attention to sociohistorical forces that have precipitated modifications to the use and meaning of the category and fluctuations in the range of people that it encompasses. Barnes's book offers rather a transhistorical account of disability, in keeping with the general refusal of analytic philosophy to appreciate the historicity of conceptual, epistemological, and discursive objects (Tremain 2017b). As Jane Dryden (2019) explains, Barnes is concerned to advance a rule-based account of disability by arguing that disability is precisely that for which the disability rights movement promotes justice and, furthermore, that these judgements about what counts as disability are rule-based, using cluster-concept reasoning. Barnes puts it thus: "Disability is all and only the things that the disability rights movement ought to consider as things they are promoting justice for—it is rule-based solidarity among people with certain kinds of bodies" (Barnes 2016, 46).

Dryden remarks that insofar as Barnes aims to pick out a set of rules for what disability is, in an ontological sense, she argues that this (rule-governed) conception of disability can be applied across history. As Dryden notes, for example, although Barnes acknowledges that "Richard III wouldn't have self-identified as disabled," she nonetheless argues that he was disabled (Barnes 2016, 50-51, in Dryden, 2019). Notice that Barnes's claims in this context implicitly rely upon a transhistorical and transcultural notion of normality from which (transhistorical and transcultural) disability is a departure. I and others have variously offered remarks, however, that underline the historical and cultural specificity of dominant notions of normality and disability, regardless of whether these notions have been articulated by medical authorities or by disabled people's movements. For instance, Sandra Yellowhorse has emphasized that Diné notions of disability and the stories through which they are conveyed, although impacted by colonialism and forced assimilation, nevertheless continue to be distinct from both medicalized notions of disability and the individualistic notions of disability that the white-dominated American disabled people's movement advances. As Yellowhorse explains it, Diné stories of disability as a communal relationship can be found in Diné land-based knowledge systems, oral histories, art, and songs and prayers (Yellowhorse 2023). In *Foucault and Feminist Philosophy of Disability,* I trace a genealogy of normality that shows how its emergence and modification (as a property of individuals) is inextricably intertwined with the emergence of modern conceptions of impairment and disability. None of this historicity is acknowledged on Barnes's account. Yet demonstration of the historical contingency and cultural specificity of the apparatuses of disability and normality are crucial for their transformation in philosophical discourse and the wider social and political milieu.

Indeed, insofar as Barnes assumes transhistorical notions of normality and disability, she limits the questions that appear as relevant to her analysis. As Dryden puts it, "If it's already decided that some feature 'counts' as disability regardless of when and where it shows up, then a lot of the most interesting and important questions go away." Dryden remarks that if the question with respect to the ontology of disability that concerns us is whether a given historical example fits with our current concept of disability, then we seem to be "hung up on the wrong question." For Dryden, the more interesting questions that we could ask of a given historical example of disability are: *How* did it work in its context? What did it *do*? How did it mark out certain folks? What purposes did this serve? How was it justified? What kinds of knowledge production and dissemination were involved in maintaining it? How did it change over time? (Dryden 2019; emphasis in Dryden). These sorts of questions, Dryden asserts, direct us toward the relationship between disability and other social forces, identities, and classifications, enabling us to "connect the dots" between disability and racialized, class, or gendered identity and thus to better understand what a given society privileges, values, and holds up as "ideal," as opposed to what it does not uphold and thus what harm may ensue (ibid.). These sorts of questions, furthermore, call for historicized and contextualized accounts of how the classification of disability emerged and how it has come to describe certain people and putative characteristics rather than befit the sort of recourse to transhistorical (rule-based) criteria that Barnes attempts to lay out. My argument is that the best historicized and contextualized accounts of the emergence of the classification of disability would involve genealogical consideration of the epistemological scaffolding for the classification of disability, namely, the scaffolding that "the diagnostic style of reasoning" (as I refer to it) has provided (Tremain 2017a, 2019).

The rigid formula of the "decompositional" approach to analysis that Barnes details at the outset of her book largely falls away early in the book. Throughout the book, however, she nevertheless relies upon the general impetus of the approach by employing counterfactuals, puzzle cases, and thought experiments in ways that enable her to advance argumentative claims about (for instance) what a so-called function is, when the absence of a function is a harm but not bad, when a disability (construed as a natural human difference) is a harm but not bad, and how disability (construed as the lack of a function) should be celebrated. This type of decompositional analysis of disability into discrete constituents–functions, capacities, levels of severity, and so on–is characteristic of analytic philosophy of disability and described by Wasserman and Aas as "reliable" and "intuitive." Notice, however, that this conception of disability individualizes and naturalizes it in ways that largely dovetail with the prevalent medicalized and individualized conception of disability that is currently naturalized in philosophy, a conception according to which (again) disability is a philosophically uninteresting and value-neutral biological trait, that is, a self-evidently natural attribute, characteristic, difference, or property that some people embody or possess. Indeed, most analytic philosophy of disability is consumed with attempts to refute the normative claims about disability that mainstream analytic philosophers espouse, while retaining many of the ontological assumptions about disability that these mainstream philosophers presuppose. Some (though not all) analytic philosophers of disability who assume aspects of the prevailing conception of disability in this way even retain the prevailing assumption according to which disability is a natural disadvantage, a direction in which some of Barnes's arguments in *The Minority Body* lead.

Recall that, for Barnes, disability is a mere human difference rather than a bad human difference. Insofar as Barnes employs a decompositional approach to disability in order to argue in this way, she simplifies inescapably complex social phenomena, social phenomena an adequate understanding and examination of which require an account of how networks of productive apparatuses of power generate disability and its putatively natural foundation, impairment. An account of the relation between disability and the machinations and modalities of productive forms of social power or indeed any account at all of the institutional and structural relation between disability and social power relations is nevertheless woefully missing from the theory of disability that Barnes elaborates in *The Minority Body*. In other words, as I have suggested, Barnes's theory of disability mirrors the apolitical and individualized understanding of disability that mainstream philosophy assumes. Given that the underrepresentation of disabled philosophers is mutually constitutive of and intertwined with the conception of disability that predominates in philosophy, Barnes's theory of disability does not therefore recommend itself as a candidate for a social ontology of disability or, more generally, a philosophy of disability, that would substantially improve the professional and institutional position of disabled philosophers nor contribute, in the long run, to the improvement of the social, economic, and political position of disabled people throughout society. Indeed, the analytic methodology that Barnes uses to articulate her theory of disability inadvertently undermines the critical force that the theory might at first seem to promise; that is, the reliance of Barnes's theory on the individualistic methodological, theoretical, and apolitical assumptions of analytic philosophy that inform the conception of disability that currently prevails in mainstream philosophy renders the theory counterproductive for a social ontology of disability that aims to contribute to radical transformation of the cultural, economic, and sociopolitical situation of disabled people.

Barnes stipulates that a good theory of disability must fulfill a criterion of noncircularity (Barnes 2016, 13). The analytic philosopher condemns circular arguments as fallacious, as violations of the strictures of rational discourse. In an article that offers advice for philosophers who want to engage in social activism, Julinna C. Oxley (2020) claims, for example, that one of the virtues of good philosopher-activists is that they are "logical" which, for Oxley, means that they "use logically sound arguments, do not make blatant or obvious logical fallacies, especially informal fallacies such as circular argument, slippery slope, red herring, straw man, etc." (Oxley 2020, 6, 15). In this regard, Barnes cites as an exemplar of circularity my article "The Subject of Impairment" (2002), which appeared as a chapter in an interdisciplinary collection of work on disability (Barnes 2016, 26). The chapter is a reformatted and revised version of my article "On the Government of Disability," whose argument dismantled the impairment-disability distinction that structures the British social model of disability, which, at the time, was the dominant model of disability in disability studies and activist circles. As I (2017b) have pointed out, Barnes misconstrues both the assumptions of the British social model and my criticisms of it.

In the 2001 and 2002 articles, in my books, and in numerous other contexts, I argue that disability (a complex apparatus of power) effectively constitutes impairment–by and through a host of administrative, medical, and juridical practices and strategies–as its prediscursive, biological foundation in order to naturalize itself and, in doing so, to camouflage its own thoroughly contingent status (for example, 2001, 2010, 2015, 2017a, 2020b). The identification of this argument as circular, as fallacious, stems from the analytic philosopher's failure to understand the productive and performative constraints of neoliberal power and the constitutive and "self-authenticating" (Hacking 1992, 13) character of styles of reasoning that apparatuses of power coalesce. As Judith Butler (1999) explains these performative constraints, juridical forms of power *produce* the subjects that they subsequently come to represent. Indeed, I want to argue that this failure to understand the productive and performative constraints of (neoliberal) power is the most significant downfall of "analytic" philosophy of disability. In short, analytic philosophers of disability (like analytic philosophers in general) misunderstand how power operates and hence misrepresent it.

Foucault was acutely aware of the constraints of modern juridical forms of power, analyzing "problematizations"–that is, the sociodiscursive emergence, constitution, and identification of phenomena as "problems" to which solutions have come to be sought–in terms of the historical conditions of possibility that have enabled them to emerge and to bring into being the conceptual objects that motivate them. In *Foucault and Feminist Philosophy of Disability* and other contexts, I endeavour to show how, through a host of administrative, legal, medical, and other discourses and practices, the productive operations of power (namely, biopower) have generated the historical conditions of possibility for the emergence of the "problem" of disability. In the first chapter of the book, I drew on Ian Hacking's pithy remark according to which the positivist's charge that genealogy relies upon the genetic fallacy is "insubstantial name-calling" (Hacking 2002, 63) that serves to obscure the historical contingency of the practices and relations of social power that genealogy uncovers and elaborates (71-72). In the fifth chapter of the book and other contexts, furthermore, I argue that mainstream (i.e., analytic) bioethicists who charge that criticisms of medically assisted suicide employ fallacious slippery-slope reasoning have refused to recognize that these criticisms aptly describe the incremental normalization of relatively recent forms of power, especially the intentional and nonsubjective character of these power relations (Tremain 2017a, 175-177). In this context, I want to point out that claims about the putatively fallacious circularity of my argument with respect to the impairment-disability distinction likewise misunderstand the operations of neoliberal biopower. In short, the allegedly objective fallacies of reasoning to which I have referred are both embedded in, and constitute an implicit endorsement of, outdated ideas about how power operates, that is, these purportedly universal fallacies of reasoning are inscribed in culturally specific histories.

When we understand that productive forms of power constitute impairment as the naturalized antecedent of disability in order to provide justification for the multiplication and expansion of the regulatory effects of the apparatus of disability, we can recognize that both Barnes's claims with respect to the ontological status of disability and her criticisms about the circularity of my ontology of disability rely upon a juridical conception of power according to which power is repressive rather than productive. A central assumption of my work in philosophy of disability is that juridical conceptions of power cannot robustly account for the political and discursive production of impairment, nor the production of nature, body, race, gender, and other (real) social constructions. Nevertheless, accepted philosophical analyses of disability–including bioethical analyses of disability–generally presuppose these conceptions in the terms of which power is centralized, can be possessed like an object, and operates downward from a centralized authority above to repress and constrain according to a binary logic. Indeed, analytic philosophy of disability in general assumes that power is fundamentally repressive rather than productive. I want to note, therefore, that philosophies and theories of disability that rely upon juridical notions of power presuppose that (1) the allegedly inherent identities and subjectivities of disabled people are recognized rather than made; that (2) impairments and disabilities are prediscursive human characteristics (properties, attributes, or differences) rather than artifactual products of (among other things) the very medical, administrative, and academic classifications that identify and measure them; and that (3) "people with impairments" and "people with disabilities"–rather than inventions of the apparatus of disability whose classification and signification as such are designed to enable normalization of populations in the service of neoliberalism–have existed everywhere, throughout all of history.

Hacking's account of styles of reasoning and their self-authenticating character provides compelling means with which a vibrant social ontology of disability should respond to disdain in analytic philosophy and moral responsibility theory for historical approaches and to Barnes's charge that arguments about the performativity of (the apparatus of) disability and, by implication, biopower more generally, are circular. As Hacking (who acknowledges his debt to Foucault) explains it, each style of reasoning is the historically and culturally specific canon of objectivity about the phenomena—new types of objects, new types of evidence, new ways to be a candidate for truth and falsehood, new types of laws, and new types of possibilities—which the style itself has brought into being as these types of things. Hacking argues that "there are neither sentences that are candidates for truth, nor independently identified objects to be correct about, prior to the development of a style of reasoning" (Hacking 1992, 10). Sentences of the relevant kinds are candidates for truth or falsehood only when a style of reasoning makes them so. "The truth of a sentence (of a kind introduced by a style of reasoning)," Hacking writes, "is what we find out by reasoning using that style. Styles become standards of objectivity because they get at the truth. But a sentence of that kind is a candidate for truth or falsehood only in the context of the style." In short, styles of reasoning are, as he puts it, self-authenticating (13). Indeed, Hacking regards the apparent circularity in the self-authentication of styles of reasoning as a virtue of the idea of a style of reasoning: this circularity goes some distance to explain why styles of reasoning are stable and enduring. Each style of reasoning, he remarks, has its own characteristic techniques of self-stabilization and persists, in its own unique and peculiar way, because it has harnessed these self-stabilizing techniques. If the self-authenticating character of styles of reasoning were understood, Hacking says, we would have gone some way toward grasping the "quasi-stability" of science (14–16).

Neither the apparatus of disability, nor the self-authenticating character of the diagnostic style of reasoning that contributes to its reproduction and reinforces it, operates according to juridical strategies of social power, that is, operates in merely repressive terms; however, juridical conceptions are fundamental to the claims about disability that analytic responsibility theory, analytic philosophy of disability, and mainstream (analytic) philosophy advance, as so-called applications of normative ethical and political theories to concerns about disability and distributive justice amply demonstrate. Nor can the complexity of these phenomena of current forms of power–that is, the apparatus of disability and the diagnostic style of reasoning–be captured by the decontextualized step-by-step, linear methodology that, as Botts points out, guides analytic philosophy. The "circularity" of arguments with respect to performative power and self-authenticating styles of reasoning, a "circularity" that is at the heart of my philosophy of disability, is generative, cumulative, and persistent.

Oxley (like Barnes and [most] other analytic philosophers) assumes that logical fallacies are straightforwardly universal, objective, and transparent disqualifiers of modes of thinking. Yet I maintain that philosophers should seriously reconsider both the uncontested status that these devices have achieved within philosophy and the disciplining role among philosophers that they enjoy. I am concerned in particular to problematize (in Foucault's sense) the ways in which the identification and implementation of so-called logical fallacies continue to be positioned as (always) outside of power, as beyond power and thus never initiated and motivated by power, and hence rendered unrecognizable as instruments produced and iterated *in the service of* power. Even heretofore feminist critiques of argumentation do not, I maintain, extend far enough in this regard (see Nye 1990; Orr 1989; Rooney 2012; Yap 2013).

Kristie Dotson has made this sort of argument about epistemology in general. In an essay that is deeply critical of "the bad magic" of colonialist epistemologies, Dotson (2021) argues that an epistemology ought to be regarded as suspect if it fails to create avenues with which to detect its own limits and instead normalizes the limits of any mode of world-making. As Dotson puts it, "an epistemology that does not build into its functioning an acknowledgement of the *governance value* of epistemologies themselves, is, at best, incomplete and, at worse, an epistemology that continually invokes hierarchies for the sake of its own function" (Dotson 2021; emphasis added). The charge of circularity, I want to argue, is a strategy of governance (to use Dotson's term) or government (to use Foucault's term) whose alleged objectivity conceals the productive operations of power and whose purported universalization and normalization conceals its temporal and cultural location and interests. To take another example, the charge of slippery-slope reasoning, which proponents of assisted suicide and euthanasia direct at philosophers of disability who criticize the institutionalization of these practices, has worked in these ways to reinstate its own rhetorical and governmental force, ensuring that up-to-date criticisms of the practices and their institutionalization are neither seriously considered in the discipline nor even casually entertained (Tremain 2017a).

A Revolutionary Proposal

A social ontology of disability designed to contribute to the cultural, economic, institutional, philosophical, and political transformation required to significantly change the social situation of disabled people should account for the historicity of the apparatus of disability and the practices, mechanisms, and strategies that this apparatus of power comprises, including the types of objects, sentences, classifications, and possibilities from which it has coalesced and that it brings into being, usually in collusion with other apparatuses such as race, age, biology, rationality, normality, nature, gender, and health. Recall that to motivate the articulation of a historicist account of (the apparatus of) disability in philosophy, I have called for a conceptual revolution with respect to how philosophers understand the metaphysics of disability and how they research, write, and teach about the elements claimed to constitute the ontology and ontological status of disability. This conceptual revolution would be politically informed from the ground up, that is, this revolution would comprise a politicized conceptual re-engineering of our perceptions of and understandings about what disability is; a genealogical analysis of how it emerged into discourse as a natural human attribute, property, or characteristic; and an antifoundational analysis of how its ontological status *as* natural is reproduced and sustained.

The conceptual schema that, at present, comprises naturalized perceptions and understandings of impairment and disability is a product of the apparatus of disability, which is, itself, a historically contingent mechanism of a vast network of governmentality and control–biopower–whose operations are directed to maximization of the conditions conducive to life (Tremain 2015, 2017a). My use in this regard of Foucault's idea of apparatus enables me to move philosophical discussion about the ontology of disability away from restrictive depoliticized and naturalizing conceptualizations of disability, according to which disability is (for instance) a disadvantageous personal characteristic or attribute, a property of given individuals, or a human difference. My assumption that disability is an apparatus, in Foucault's sense, moves philosophical discussion of disability toward a more comprehensively politicized conceptualization of it than Barnes and other analytic philosophers of disability, as well as philosophers of moral responsibility, provide, a conceptualization of disability that is (among other things) historicist and relativist and, hence, culturally sensitive in ways that these other conceptions of disability are not.

As an apparatus, disability is a historically specific aggregate that comprises, constitutes, and is constituted by and through a complex and complicated set of discourses, technologies, identities, and practices that emerge from medical and scientific research, government policies and administrative decisions, academic initiatives, activism, art and literature, mainstream popular culture, and so on. To understand disability as an apparatus in this way is to conceive of it as a far-reaching matrix of power that contributes to, is inseparable from, and reinforces other apparatuses of historical force relations, including settler colonialism, white supremacy, gender asymmetries, and global capitalism. On this ontology of disability, disability is not a metaphysical substrate; a natural, biological category; or a characteristic that only distinct 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. My argument is that if feminist (and other) philosophers were to take up this call for a conceptual revolution about disability, that is, were to take up my proposal that disability is a historically and culturally specific apparatus of power, they would hasten the disruption of the pervasive ableist gaslighting and other forms of injustice that moral responsibility theory currently produces, that disabled philosophers currently experience in philosophy, and that disabled people in general confront in society more widely.

Let the revolution begin.

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