

A Discursive Bind: The Paradox of Inclusive Education

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Abstract

A Discursive Bind: The Paradox of Inclusive Education

Tavis Eachan Triance

This study explores the socio-cultural constructions that have accumulated within and around the phenomenon of disability in contemporary Canadian society. It inquires as to the cultural impulses, norms, and formations of identity that occur within and through systems of education, particularly with regard to how disabled identities are constructed, controlled and maintained through various practices at play within such systems. It argues that educational institutions are prominent in shaping, both implicitly and explicitly, legitimate identities, cultural values and social norms within Western society. Such familiar social systems provide a significant terrain through which to examine social responses to the phenomena of disability as well as providing a place from which to address and reconstitute such responses and their attendant social effects. If we view the current Western orientation towards disability as something that stems from various alterable political and social currents, it follows that the oppressive social effects experienced by disabled people would also prove alterable. It is such exclusionary social effects and the network of hidden social structures that work to enforce them that are addressed in this work. I believe it is imperative, both in the realm of disability studies and in the field of education, to trace the societal impulse which might account for such a pervasive banishment of those deemed mentally, physically, or socially abnormal from the bounds of 'legitimate' society.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father Roger Triance with whom I would have liked to share it.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Prejudice, in whatever form it takes, is not an inevitable consequence of the human condition, it is the product of a particular form of social development associated with western capitalism. If we wish to eliminate prejudice, therefore, we must arrest and transform that development. In addition to economic and political initiatives this must include the construction of a culture which acknowledges, accommodates and celebrates human difference, whatever its cause, rather than oppresses it (Barnes, 1996, p.57).

“Difference is what all of us have in common . . . dependence, not individual independence is the rule” (Davis, 2002, p. 26).

The aim of this work is to identify and articulate the character and workings of those social structures that constitute and govern our knowledge of disability within contemporary western societies. This inquiry is intended to illuminate a number of the ways in which such bodies of knowledge, and the deleterious social effects they engender, are articulated through institutions widely perceived to be, if not wholly beneficent, than as close as is likely to be found. In fact, the stated aims of such institutions (schools, charities, religious institutions, etc.) are often set in direct opposition to social effects that are unwittingly produced and maintained under their auspices. This thesis is, in turn, an excavation of claims made by the Canadian system of education in accordance with the majority of western education systems, to provide inclusive education for all students perceived to be disabled. Throughout this thesis I will speculate as to ways that those of us in the sphere of education might initiate *a rehabilitation of the disabling bodies of knowledge* that produce and maintain the correspondingly disabled bodies and minds that are engendered by an exclusionary and often oppressive social reality.

In conducting this study I proceed with the belief that in order to allow for the development of a genuinely inclusive form of education, be it in the theoretical or in the practical realm, it is necessary to enter into a process of negotiation and struggle with socially embedded discourses that are deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness. Such discourses work multifariously to govern and delineate the character and boundaries of socially legitimated identities¹, unceasingly mobilized to resist and subvert change by appearing as natural or normal aspects of society and thus remaining outside the scope of popular awareness. The project of developing any sort of deep or meaningful inclusion must begin with an establishment of the perception, comprehension, and acceptance of the social conditions that mark the phenomenon of disability. The absence of such an understanding precludes anything more than a token valuation of difference, a curtailed understanding of the need for social inclusion and a cosmetic investment in the need for human equity in late capitalist society. The importance of this comprehensive view of disability is demonstrated in the following passage:

The rhetoric of sameness dominates the twentieth century by vehemently promoting the erasure of differences as its ultimate goal—we are all essentially the same and therefore equal . . . Our rhetoric extols the desirability of a fully integrated society while overlooking the persistence of widespread ‘disparities, contradictions, and roughness [that] remain’ (Mitchell, 1999, p. xii).

The Disabling Impulse

This work is based in and repeatedly refers to a socially derived power whose particular character and bounds will be discussed throughout. It is based in social models of disability but diverges from many of them in its employment of poststructural modes

¹ I refer to this process as the social legitimation of identities in order to place emphasis on the fact that any identity of social practice may be socially legitimated and that this is a matter of power rather than a matter of essence, nature, underlying order or fundamental truth.

of analysis particularly with regards to the relationship between power and knowledge in society. I present a preliminary explanation of it here in order to provide a point of reference from which to draw throughout the remainder of this discussion. Much of this understanding of power and its relationship to discursive fields of knowledge was initially derived from various readings of Foucault's (1972; 1980; 1991; 1994; 2003) work on the subject, particularly as dealt with in, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, *Discipline & Punish, Power/ Knowledge*, and his transcribed lectures, *Abnormal*, and *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*. Although this body of work provided the impetus for, and the underlying framework of this project, I have found that the ideas of many writers whose work is of a diverse character have folded into and converged with it when turned upon the constitution of disablement and its articulation throughout western society. The common strain is their belief in the need for widespread acknowledgment of, and struggle with, totalizing systems of knowledge, systems that would claim and monopolize truth. It seems to me that this concern and its consequent implications for social justice and human equity underpin many of the problems in western society and throughout the world in its entirety, including the specific areas of disability and education.

The disabling impulse can be conceived of as a range of socially embedded discourses that govern, codify, and shape our culturally shared knowledge of disability—a knowledge that creates exclusions, disempowerments and prejudices. The proliferation and flux of the concomitant forms of power that are the basis for these inequities and oppressions have, throughout our historical lineage, been translated into a range of barely perceptible knowledges, attitudes, and practices that are embedded in all of us. These structures are translated through latent discourses of disablement, bound up in our

thoughts, our actions, our beliefs, and even in our feelings. They are shaped and reshaped, repeatedly generating themselves through such seemingly beneficent processes as the education system, systems of medicine and healthcare, and systems of social welfare. Such near unassailable social institutions are almost unanimously thought to bestow positive effects on their subjects, yet are simultaneously permeated by obscured discourses working to produce disablements, exclusions, deviancies and abnormalities. It is this sinister aspect of the disabling impulse, its negation of social awareness, dampening of sensitivity towards suffering, and erosion of the ability to effect positive change even with regard to seemingly efficacious 'helping' institutions, that prompts me to join in the small but ardent chorus of voices bent on forming a description, an illumination, a demystification of whatever aspects of this phenomenon might be lain bare for a greater part of the populace to see.

Though these socially engendered forces and their social sites of articulation too frequently remain unidentified, they provide a significant terrain through which to examine widespread, debilitating cultural responses to the phenomenon of disability. Despite the proliferation of 'radical' approaches to knowledge such as Michel Foucault's (1980) process of 'constant critique,' Aronowitz and Giroux's (1993) notion of the 'transformative intellectual', and Paulo Freire's (1977) process of 'political literacy,' in the lineage of western thought, they are all too rarely implemented in school systems themselves. If we are ever to provide learners with such ways of apprehending and eventually freeing one another from the injurious structures of power that cling to our daily social processes, it is necessary that we examine our own practices, our own embedded discourses and our own subjectivities. It is through these forms of education

that we might begin to initiate a more advanced state of self reflexivity in order to disentangle our society from those forms of power that “reach into the very grain of individuals, touch their bodies and inserts [themselves] into their action and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (Gore, 1998, p. 233).

As in the work of Henri-Jacques Stiker (1999) I would like to point out that, while this question has moral implications, in as far as it requires that we consider whether or not we can live together in mutual acceptance of our fellow humans, we need not appeal solely to this dimension. In fact, whether or not the conditions surrounding the widespread treatment of disability in western society can be construed as socially deficient according to whatever moral compass we happen to employ is perhaps only the most obvious problem to be dealt with. The proposition that the very conditions surrounding the way that difference and similitude are made to *mean* within the western capitalist social organization might be wholly suspect is a much more deeply rooted and potentially devastating issue, for it is from such fundamental meanings that common practice is drawn. This is because there is a significantly paradoxical quality inherent in the maintenance of a social practice that relies upon the enforcement and maintenance of a fictitious similitude for its existence, particularly within a society that claims to afford its citizens equal rights. It is only possible to assert that citizens are either equal or different if we have built up a social practice by which we might interpret the characteristics of which they are comprised as either one or the other. In order to know ourselves with regard to this matter and to know our society, it is necessary to become aware that difference is neither an exception nor a horror, but a state of being that pervades all things. If we do not immediately apprehend this situation as such, Henri-

Jacques Stiker states that, “if we do not submit to this reality, the generator of differences, among which is disability, we will be imposing the law of the able, and then why not the law of the abler among the able, and then why not the law of the ablest of all” (Stiker, 1999, p.12). The natural, in a peculiarly obvious revelation (yet contrary to what we are commonly encouraged to believe), is that which differs and is diverse. If we recognize this state of being, it becomes easier to accept that there is no disability, only disablement, and that neither exists without the specific socio-cultural conditions that constitute them as such. There are enduring currents of power that underpin the disabling discourses by which society constructs disablement and manages legitimate identities. Unfortunately, their pervasive social embodiment allows them only to be understood in certain limited ways, ways that produce particular beneficial effects for some populations while producing only abuses and exclusions for others. Such realizations do not remove the abuses that occur in order to enforce this idealization of similitude “[anymore] than does science to eliminate racism by demystifying the fable of the inferiority of certain races” (p.12). If inclusion is to be facilitated within the education system and within society itself, than these embedded knowledges must be engaged with on a much deeper level.

Linda Ware (2004) states in the final chapter of her collection entitled *Ideology and the Politics of (In)Exclusion* that, “the tradition among special education researchers [is to] author a continuous progress narrative of policy and practice that minimizes the complexity of the field as a whole and inclusion in particular”(p.183). Such a tradition, while painting a publicly palatable picture of the treatment of disabled people, does little in terms of extending any critical, comprehensive, or far-reaching attempt to resist or

even examine the structures that constitute disability as an exclusively biomedical deficit to be erased or fixed and inclusion as a little more than heart-warming rhetoric.

Engagement

How then can we understand the educational institution in terms that sufficiently address these power structures that remain obscured from the classrooms, gymnasiums, board meetings, counsellor's offices, parent teacher nights, playgrounds, administrator's offices, resource classrooms and other familiar aspects of school life? How might the bulk of western society more effectively apprehend and question structures that work systematically to obscure and normalize debilitating knowledges and educatory practices? How might we more commonly engage with discourses propagating systemic exclusions and question the logic of 'helping' institutions that, either knowingly or unknowingly, preclude equity, so that we may create a critically oriented education—an education that is capable of passing on effective practices of inclusion that are more than just cosmetic? We do not exist within the explicit social control of a totalitarian state, nonetheless there are other socio-cultural mechanisms that delimit, conceal, and direct a wide range of very familiar, seemingly natural, social effects including: our thoughts, our actions, the meanings we take as fundamental within our lives, our notions of what constitutes knowledge, that which we think of as representing truth, and even our very identities. It is through these power effects, these socially embedded discourses that the education system (one of the primary articulators of such discourses) resists the facilitation of inclusion, equity, and other forms of socially just practice promised therein. Pronounced disparities between academic, professional and popular responses to disability hold clues as to the discordance in the way this phenomenon is perceived and

understood throughout western society. There is a significant and paradoxical division between the socio-politically oriented, critical approach to issues of disability (difference and inclusion, exhibited primarily by those engaged in the political struggle to broaden knowledge of disability) and the disengaged, reified² ways in which such issues are met throughout the remainder of society and within so called ‘helping’ institutions.

To insist so piously (as school boards, politicians, teachers, service providers and administrators have tended to do) on the efficacy of inclusion without regard for the power-laden divisions and demarcations enforced within the school system and within society at large, is to ignore the deep and complex character of this social phenomenon. These are myths and simplifications that work to inject what are essentially untenable positions with a falsely coherent sense of progress and the unlikely possibility of their realization. David T. Mitchell illustrates this in his introduction to Henri-Jacques Stiker’s, *A History of Disability*, writing that “our rhetoric extols the desirability of a fully integrated society while overlooking the persistence of widespread ‘disparities, contradictions, and roughness [that] remain’ (Mitchell, 1999, p.xii). He concludes by asserting that “to elide our engagement with the reality of difference by promoting an ambiguous language of civil(ized) homogeneity becomes tantamount to denying disability the uniqueness of its demands upon the individual and sociality alike” (p.xii).

In this work I attempt to outline an alternative to positions based in positivist and medico-scientific epistemologies by illuminating and questioning the pervasive reification of disability throughout society. It is my belief that such ways of

² Reification is not used entirely in the Marxist sense of the word in this case but rather as, “the generation of a ‘phantom objectivity’, meaning that a human creation—an institution or an ideology say—takes on the character of ‘a force that controls human beings . . . [It is] the process in which ‘thing-hood’ becomes the standard of objective reality; the ‘given world’, in other words, is taken to be the truth of the world” (Bewes, 2002, p.4).

understanding the phenomenon of disability construct it so that it means in particularly injurious ways that are neither natural, nor inalterable. In fact, such discursive bodies of knowledge maintain disability in a state that is incommensurate with aspects of the western democratic consciousness that are widely held to be fundamental, particularly with regard to those areas of society perceived to be beneficent (education, inclusion, social justice, equity, etc.). Peter McLaren (1994) comments on such a discrepancy between commonly held perceptions stating that:

Postmodern social theory has rightly claimed that we lack a vocabulary or epistemology that is able to render the world empirically discoverable or accurately mappable, and that experience and reason cannot be explained outside of the social production of intelligibility. It emphasizes the indissociability of language, power, and subjectivity . . . The labyrinthian path of Enlightenment rationality [is] shown to function not as an access to but rather as a detour from the iterability of meaning—from its connection to human suffering and oppression (p.196).

Such attempts to re-think traditional beliefs about the basis and workings of power provide us with the impetus to question and reorient programs of inclusion from a positivistic epistemological position (rehabilitating, adjusting, fixing, remediating or ‘helping’), to an inquiry into the power laden basis of social practices that, in this case, conspire to further enable widespread cultural inequities. While it is necessary to elude, “the fashionable apostasy of certain postmodern articulations and inflections of critical social theory [that] have noticeably abandoned the language of social change, emancipatory practice, and transformative politics” (McLaren, 1994, p.196), postmodern social critique provides an abundant and fertile soil in which to attempt the atypical, the heretical, the unorthodox and the revolutionary. I feel that such drastic social reorientations as are needed to usher in a widespread and meaningful practice of

inclusion and a true valuation of difference can only begin to be facilitated after such a violent break from established structures of knowledge.

If endeavours towards inclusive education are to stop simply mouthing a neutered rhetoric of equity, it is necessary that they avoid becoming embroiled in the familiar and un-contemplated minutia that so often characterize programmatic ‘practical’ solutions. It is equally necessary that they put a halt to what are merely token attempts to create a pacifying and inoffensive yet fundamentally inefficacious integration of students with disabilities, and perhaps most delusorily that they stop promoting belief in the possibility of an education in the current western capitalist social order that is wholly cleansed of inequity and discrimination. Rather than attempting simply to integrate disabled students into those places from which they had been previously removed, it is necessary to expose the social practices that legitimized their segregation—thus moving towards inclusion rather than integration. According to Corbett and Slee (2000):

The challenge for the integrationist is how to regulate the flow of different students: what streams they go into in the regular school; what additional resources will be required to contain these defective and difficult students in the regular school (albeit at the margins); or what special settings will they occupy outside of regular educational provision (p.134-35).

With regards to the last point, it is crucial to mention that although reified conceptions of the most basic daily processes are artificially stable and falsely unitary and exist to a great extent throughout society, the alternative conception most often subscribed to by proponents of current policies of inclusion is one which relies equally on fabrication. To include someone spatially whose very existence has come to be understood in terms of their difference from those who traditionally inhabit that space (the classroom for example) is only to include them in the most superficial way. It is a

utopian arrangement erected upon the faulty pretence of a clear and undifferentiated social order, a theorized “‘good society’ [having] little immediate prospect of being achieved” (Bewes, 2002, p.25) given the presence of unaltered discourses of disablement. And while the former operates within the fabric of late capitalist societies to a large degree undisrupted, and is certainly a worthy target for critique, the latter remains little more than a poorly conceived attempt to feign inclusion where there can be none. Fervent idealism is a far more ennobling and politically loaded ground upon which to stand, yet it still relies on an essentially delusory conception of the current possibilities available for western society. If we are to avoid such polarized responses to phenomena that create and legitimate very real social abuses, we must calm our revolutionary fervour and embrace the problems in a way that is multifarious enough to encompass the myriad gradations of difference of which disability is composed. It is a great deal more representative of the current social terrain, if we allow for the simultaneous existence of a spectrum of possible ‘realities’ to be negotiated, rather than insisting on the programmatic formation of one overriding educational policy. Given the advanced state of late capitalist society and the pervasiveness of its controls and governances, this utopian ‘good society’ has little chance of being achieved, and will as a result skew any reforms that might have a chance of occurring. With this as the baseline for our political and social revolution, the only mitigation of these two extremes that is at all tenable is methodological, theoretical, or aesthetic, for “theoretical language, like poetry, is a means of disrupting the reification of everyday language” (Bewes, 2002, p.25).

I locate myself among those who feel that through the production of non-reified, or at the very least, significantly less reified discourses such as theory, poetics,

philosophy, art, creative forms of writing and others, it is possible to disrupt and supplant reified/ reifying discourses responsible for strengthening the straitjacket of unquestioned, normalizing, cultural knowledge. The search for new ways to understand, new paradigms, new epistemologies, and new modes of expression are a primary feature of this work. “[Many of] these issues are theoretical in the sense that they cannot be settled solely by discovering facts about the world, but they are also practical in that they have practical manifestations in the lives of people with and without disabilities (Wendell, 1996, p.1). The structures and processes of a society that increasingly colonizes, encloses, and polices the bounds of possible meaning, social significance, and individual worth must be examined and illuminated and all members of society must be enabled and encouraged to partake in that re-conceptualization. It is necessary that we remain attuned to the highly personal, material relations of oppression and avoid reducing the problems with which we are confronted to the realms of political ideology or academic inquiry. As McLaren (1994) states, “despite its limitations for constructing an emancipatory politics, postmodern criticism can offer educators and cultural workers a means of problematizing the issue of difference and diversity in ways that can deepen and extend existing debates” (p. 195). I believe that it is neither necessary nor possible to know, in a continuous and definitive sense, those fragile and discontinuous unities which we deal with on a daily basis. Furthermore, I place great credence in the belief that such iconoclastic forms of critique present a way to initiate new, innovative, and previously unimagined ways of questioning longstanding, pernicious problems such as those based in the difference/ normality dialectic. Is it not part of the pursuit of raising human consciousness of ourselves to gradually and tenuously flesh out alternate forms for those resolute

structures, those dogged groupings, those manufactured wholes, that have become so suspect? Do those of us who work in schools not counsel our students to tease out their answers on their own rather than strictly relying on what the teacher has said? Is it a grave situation if their understanding is slightly different than our own understanding, if their analysis has, in our mind, been somewhat misconstrued, or if they are wholly wrong? Do we afford such leeway for our own endeavours, or is this simply a fallacy with which to imbue the young with hope? Cherryholmes (1988) argues, invoking Foucault that:

. . . power precedes speech and that discourse is governed by anonymous rules. When theoretical and practical discourses are viewed in this setting, the distinctions break down between theory and practice, between empirical theory and normative theory, between description of an action and prescription for a course of action, between explanation of social practice and justification of practice, and between fact and value. Knowledge does not exist apart from the constitutive interests that lead to its production. There is no clear line of demarcation between knowledge on one side and ideology, human interest, and power on the other (p.84).

Why then, in light of even the possibility of such insights, would we fail to provide all students with the theoretical tools to begin constituting and reconstituting the knowledge claims, and the effects of knowledge that surround them, and by which all things social are governed?

We Must Remain Open to Possibility

In accordance with my divergence from those who construe false binaries between theory and practice I would also diverge with those who undertake to disparage all other positions, all other available orthodoxies or methodologies in order to affirm the singular correctness of their own thinking. That which inhibits the establishment of critical educational practice is not the need for more accurate inquiry to better represent

what is occurring in the 'real' world, it is the lack of openness to a project characterized by a need for an acute self reflexivity and an acceptance of the discontinuous, the non-linear, and the contradictory as able to yield a range of plausible insights and possible solutions. I agree with Foucault's (1972) sentiment when he states that, "rather than trying to reduce others to silence, by claiming that what they say is worthless, I have tried to define this blank space from which I speak, and which is slowly taking shape in a discourse that I still feel to be so precarious and so unsure" (p.17). My intention here is not to categorize those theories that have come before, praising or damning their significant or debatably insignificant aspects, nor is it to argue for the primacy of one over another. Rather, it is to draw out the common thread that exists between them in addressing a specific, yet pervasive, social phenomenon—that of the exclusion of disabled people from an education system that strives to be inclusive.

It has been my observation that there exists a great deal of overlap in the way that theorists writing from seemingly disparate methodological positions address fundamental questions having to do with what I will heretofore refer to as the disabling impulse³. I suspect that these questions stem from and pertain directly to that unquestioned sovereignty of collective social consciousness that remains deeply embedded within our every thought and action; those socially embedded ways in which we come to know things; or what has been variously described as, "those ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any examination, those links whose validity is recognized from the outset" (Foucault, 1972, p.22). It is from these eerily familiar bodies

³The disabling impulse can be thought of as the convergence of a web of socially embodied discourses constantly working to constitute disability as a deficit or problem that is primarily centred in the individual.

of knowledge that spring a widely disseminated, commonly held, cultural knowledge that impacts all those unquestioned processes that occur so routinely throughout our society.

The Necessity of Theory

Theorists of all stripes have dealt with variously construed notions of power, meaning, normality/ abnormality, identity, equity, and knowledge, and with the rise of discourse theory, have done so in an increasingly involved and often oblique manner. I would argue that this is not, as many critics would like to suggest, simply an increasingly self-conscious and labyrinthine mode of analysis with few ties to the 'real' social order. I find it equally plausible to consider such forms of social analysis critically innovative in their attempts to develop new paradigms through which to achieve greater insight into social problems that have become increasingly subtle, unconscious, and pervasive. These are creative pedagogies of suspicion disposed to unique, and often in the process mystifying/difficult, theoretical innovations developed with the aim of speaking outside those dominant, normative modes of meaning that quietly shape what can be said and thought. Or as Giroux (1996) puts it:

Postmodernism as a site of 'conflicting forces and divergent tendencies' becomes useful pedagogically when it provides elements of an oppositional discourse for understanding and responding to the changing cultural and educational shift affecting youth in North America and elsewhere. A resistant or political postmodernism seems invaluable for helping educators and others address the changing conditions of knowledge production" (p.61).

Throughout the last half of the twentieth century there has been a noticeable proliferation of such theory. Some of it, though a mere fraction of what has been produced in other more conventionally theory laden areas, has focussed its anomalous gaze upon certain issues that fall both within the realm of disability studies and within the

realm of education. Both of these disciplines have frequently been divided into scholarly undertakings that are primarily focussed on theoretical innovation and advancement, and so called 'practical' endeavours that draw upon less conspicuously theoretical currents. Despite the steadfast attempts of a relatively small number of often maligned, yet frequently cited practitioners, to anchor their socially radical scholarship in engagement and activism, this work is often painted in a negative light by practitioners who feel that poststructural theorists deal with the acute problems of the 'real' world in a way that is cavalier in its flagrant disassembly of longstanding institutions, and is rendered too abstractly to be politically valent. Such disparagement would seem to stem, at least in part, from what Linda Ware (2004) has termed, "the obvious combustibility of interrogating school systems to expose values, rituals, routines, and initiations as the explicit mechanisms that underwrite exclusion" (p.185). It has, in the past, been the tendency of educational theorists and disability theorists alike, to propagate forms of inquiry that exist in close proximity to practice, while derogating those that are thought not to be sufficiently allayed to the world of the classroom or to the medical diagnostic sphere. Or as Giroux (1996) states:

What is often missing from these contentious critiques is the recognition that since postmodernism does not operate under any absolute sign, it might be more productive to reject arguments that position postmodernism within an essentialized politics, an either/ or set of strategies. A more productive encounter would attempt, instead, to understand how postmodernism's more central insights illuminate how power is produced and circulated through cultural practices that mobilize multiple relations of subordination (p.63).

It appears likely to me that professionals (such as those who grapple with efforts to promote inclusion) are equally unwilling and unprepared to relinquish those beliefs, practices and institutions upon which their conception of the world has come to rest, as

any other member of society. This is echoed and expanded upon by Corbett and Slee (2000) in the following passage:

Inclusive education is a distinctly political . . . activity. As such it may be discomfoting, challenging professional expertise and is seen by some to deskill professionalism . . . it is a reordering of the politics of knowledge. This new politics of education introduces complexity at a time when politicians and bureaucrats are looking for standardisation and simpler sets of quick fixes. It welcomes uncertainty where the political imperative is establishing certainty (p.136).

Although groups opposing such drastic change tend to be comprised of well meaning advocates, professionals, and practitioners, in the words of Henri Giroux (1985) in prefacing Freire's widely circulated *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation*, they fail to take seriously the cultural capital of the oppressed, by [working to develop] critical and analytical tools to interrogate it (p.xx11). Unfortunately, concomitant with this sort of critical and analytical interrogation of the practical and epistemological terms of exclusion is an analysis and admittance of one's own role in the process. Such a pressing need for widespread self-critique presents a great challenge for those interested in promoting critical, self-reflexive forms of inclusion. Despite this challenge, it is my steadfast belief that there can be no sincere claim made to any equitable form of inclusion without the pervasive social rehabilitation of the way in which disability is constituted through 'helping' institutions, through reified, obfuscated discourses and throughout the whole of society.

This work endeavours to occupy a space in and around the point where education, disability and social theory intersect, both in a grounded and in an abstract sense. As a result of the frequent failure to consider such matters in a way that might provide sufficient breadth of analysis, these disciplines, and the social sciences in general, have

remained grounded in and bounded by a certain theoretical deficiency. The formation of educational discourses surrounding disability such as inclusion do not work to more effectively and comprehensively address the multifarious and complicated challenges presented by attempting to create a truly inclusive system of education. Instead the potential socio-political efficacy of inclusive education as an empowering discourse is undermined and appropriated by what Roger Slee (2004) terms, “the special needs industry” (p.53). It is in this manner that institutions claiming to be liberating, diversifying and enabling, instead work to colonize, normalize and disable, forging “unruly populations [that] are subjected to greater levels of surveillance and made governable through various protocols of exclusion and inclusion” (p. 54).

Such endeavours can gain little ground in facilitating the substantive reforms that would be necessary for the creation of the inclusive systems of education that they claim they are able to create. No amount of reworked policy, moderate school reform, or mandates to promote inclusion will address the issue at its core. Inclusion must begin not in competing ideologies, no matter what their political orientation, but in the power-laden construction of knowledge, reason and identity within a social context. While useful on a localized level, initiatives that deal with problems rooted in the difference/sameness dialectic (racism, homophobia, heteronormalization, misogyny, classism, ableism), do not do so in sufficiently diversified terms, and as such possess limited potential in addressing the issues in their full socio-structural complexity. To supplant one ideology with another, regardless of its humanizing or dehumanizing qualities, is simply to substitute one set of values for a different set of values. Such action does little to alter, or even consider, the social structures responsible for discriminatory practice in the first place.

By framing issues of social diversity in such terms we locate attempts to re-negotiate the normalizing character of educational practice in overtly politicized ideologies that simply oppose one another.

The school system, its social character, its daily practices, its physical makeup, its pedagogical functions, its belief systems, and its political structure, is itself anchored in a broader matrix of social practices articulated pervasively and invisibly throughout our daily lives. These practices subtly manifest themselves to fix the horizons of our thoughts and our actions. Such functions of power and the debilitating social contingencies that accompany them are inscribed within the social body at the most basic levels of social practice and it is necessary to turn our analyses from the realm of competing ideologies to that of such eerily familiar social discourses. For it is through the production and maintenance of these hidden networks of social governance that we mistakenly direct our efforts towards reform at the symptoms of a much deeper problem.

If we are truly interested in creating an inclusive system of education, one that does not substitute oppositional ideologies for a particularized examination of the network of discursive structures that facilitate the deleterious social effects I have been discussing, it is imperative that we encourage both learners and educators to recognize the range of ways in which foundational social effects such as difference/sameness, reason/unreason, truth/falsity, are actually constituted. We must not be afraid to pose difficult questions—both for students and for ourselves—for without such questions we are unlikely ever to reach the basis of the social inequities whose core processes have become so familiar as to disappear from the collective eye. As Giroux (1983) states, we must focus on “questions concerning the genesis, development, and normative nature of

the conceptual systems that select, organize, and define [knowledge]” (p.15) While public education presents an ideal site through which to conduct a widespread exploration of such questions, it is first necessary that we make transparent what Jennifer Gore (1998) refers to as “[education’s] own ‘regime of pedagogy,’ a set of power-knowledge relations, of discourses and practices, which constrains the most radical of educational agendas” (p. 232). I consider this to be the paradox of inclusive education indicated in the title—damaging through misdiagnosis that which it professes to help.

The initial aim of this work then, in light of what I have just suggested, is to expand and particularize the way in which power is thought to operate within and through the western late capitalist system of education. The second aim, although hardly secondary, is to draw upon this notion of power in re-orienting the education system, not only towards a more inclusive practice, but towards an understanding of the socio-cultural nexus from which fundamental social constructs precluding such practice stem. In attempting to achieve this I intend to describe an educational practice that might be more efficacious in accounting for a power embedded not just in various competing ideologies of conservatism, liberalism, multiculturalism, and antiracist education etc. and not in coherent natural categories, but in the contradictory, incoherencies of all social practice.

Thus far I have begun to provide a justification for the methodological path I have taken in illuminating a deep-seated problem which belies the implementation of an inclusive educational practice. I have also endeavoured to put forth an argument stressing the necessity of such an approach, given the current treatment of disabled individuals in western society, and have provided a preliminary description of the power laden way in which current disabling social knowledge of disability has come to be so pervasively held. This chapter will outline some of the ways that disability has been commonly understood and misunderstood, both in the past and in the present. I will then proceed in discussing some of the ways it has been intentionally re-understood, reoriented and recontextualized by disabled people themselves, disabled advocacy groups and scholars of disability. Len Barton (1996) has argued that central to any such project is a concern over social justice and equity, and that concomitant with this task is the identification and refutation of oppression through historically informed analysis and an engagement with the socio-political functioning of difference (p.1). This exploration of disabling social epistemologies represents an attempt to take up this challenge, thereby extending and expanding ongoing attempts to promote social justice and equity throughout western society. This chapter itself is by no means representative of the multitude of nuanced ways in which the socio-political project has been pursued. In the discussion that follows I attempt to survey some of the key issues and debates that have formed the foundation for new and diversified ways of understanding and explaining the interaction between social and embodied realities of disability.

In the past, the study (and even the very consideration) of disability for that matter, has been unapologetically relegated to the furthest margins of socio-cultural thought. Lennard Davis (1995), prominent American contributor to the ever-emergent field of Disability Studies writes that, “there is a strange and really unaccountable silence when the issue of disability is raised (or, more to the point, never raised); the silence is stranger, too, since so much of left criticism has devoted itself to the issue of the body, of the social construction of sexuality and gender” (p.5). The silence that Davis refers to, exemplifies the liminal⁴ and pervasively disempowered position that disabled people have come to occupy within our society. As I spoke of in the last chapter even throughout the academy (in what one might think were progressive spheres of thought) theoretical positions, legitimate ways of questioning and other means of engaging with the complex reality that disability and disablement represent, have been delimited, marginalized, and widely detached from mainstream knowledge. This said, over the last ten years there has been a recent growth of interest in various aspects of this often ignored area of social inquiry. These pockets of interest however, remain primarily centred around disabled people, disabled activist groups and specific academic disciplines, and do not for the most part extend the insights gleaned therein to other areas of society, or even to other areas of the academy. Nevertheless, the fact that the burgeoning of such localized interest has yet to significantly transform, either the character of the humanities or the fabric of society itself, should not preclude the continuation and intensification of such emancipatory efforts.

⁴ Liminality in this case refers to the sense of social suspension and disconnectedness characteristically attributed to disability within the shared social consciousness.

Disability Studies presents us with a field of inquiry that has as a primary focus, many concerns that are fundamental to the human experience: human embodiment, recognition and valuation of difference, diversity, and the equitable existence of all human beings. Although it is my belief that such widespread socio-epistemological changes must at some point be dispersed throughout the wider social body, it is through such theoretical innovation that we might aim to renegotiate the practices, politics and the very terms by which we have come to know the social phenomenon of disability. In the words of Michael Berube (2002), the importance of disability as a category of social thought may depend more on the practices and politics of people with disabilities than on the work of academic disability studies, [but] for now, Disability Studies may be in the position of finding adequate theoretical concepts with which to describe those practices and politics” (p.x). It is in this role of innovator and illuminator of the numerous, obfuscated, yet very real ways in which “disability is so intimately related to poverty, illness, and long-term unemployment” (p.xi), that disability studies as a theoretical field of inquiry, may continue to provide ways of initiating a more widespread, nuanced understanding of power laden terms of society in order to alter them for its betterment.

Disability Studies

By most accounts Disability Studies has sprung from relatively recent developments in anthropologic, civil rights, sociological, educational, and professional discourses (Gleeson, 1999). While this discipline comprises a very significant body of work that is often consciously directed towards promoting and furthering equity, inclusion and social justice, it does not by any means represent commonly held attitudes existent throughout the remainder of western society. In fact, such a critically self-

reflexive, politicized approach to issues surrounding disability tends to diverge quite significantly from the attitudes and practices that are prevalent in that wider sphere. Even within such emancipatory projects as those that fall under this activist rubric, whose specified interest is in enabling disabled people, there has very often been a splintering effect that divides different groups into separate camps based on a given approach or political agenda. A significantly restricted understanding of the character of disability within the greater social body and the lack of cohesion surrounding political projects, coupled with the sheer mass of discursive structures, working to shape and govern knowledge of disability at a micro level⁵, have all made for a very slow process in terms of the contestation, disputation and refutation of orthodox views. Nevertheless, this heightened interest has yielded a number of useful insights in the quest to highlight aspects of disablement that have been previously overlooked, disregarded, or deligitimated. The tendency to locate the inequality experienced by disabled people exclusively in their impairment and in turn with the availability of material resources and social mobility in their lives, has diverted attention from what Barnes and Mercer (2003) term, “disability’s own distinctive set of oppressive governing dynamics” (p.20). The nature of such oppression is elaborated further when they state that, “oppression is not just about being on the receiving end of tyrannical power. It is also affected through apparently liberal and ‘human’ practices . . . Thus, people in their everyday lives act and think in ways that are ‘oppressive’ to disabled people, but do not always recognize their actions as having this effect” (Barnes & Mercer, 2003, p.21).

⁵ The social constitution of knowledge can be conceptualized as working through interrelated, mutually reinforcing discourses: one working bodily, psychologically, and mentally, at the intra-personal level and the other working at the socio-structural level.

I would argue that in providing politically motivated, monothetical narratives of this sort, or simply in viewing disability in a way that lacks significant breadth, we are recreating and reinforcing the discursively based structures of knowledge that construct disability as difference and as other. Emergent analyses have come to construe disability as a form of social oppression, rather than as an unfortunate turn of fate, a biomedical aberrance in need of fixing, a personal and wholly individual tragedy, an economic exclusion or exclusion from the workforce, or any of the other unidimensional lenses that are prevalent within our society, and through which disability has come to be viewed. This has been done in the hopes that our current lack of engagement with this complex socio-cultural reality might be challenged, and so that we may be more commonly presented with an array of alternative formulations of this social phenomenon, which might in turn, trigger new demands for social change. It is necessary that we collectively become aware of the strength and debilitating effect of social constructions such as those underpinning disability, in order that we may become aware of our own part in their being permitted and maintained. For as Shapiro (2000) states, “to view disability issues solely as medical is analogous to viewing gender issues as gynaecological or racial issues as dermatological. The actual medical losses of sight, hearing, intelligence, or limbs cause less heartache than the prejudice, discrimination and intolerance that so often follows and attends the loss” (p.81).

As has been mentioned frequently, until very recently what interest there was in this area was governed primarily by bio-medical conceptions of disability focussed upon the individual and a supposed pathological state of existence (Drake, 1996). The epistemological basis for such work, and by extension, for both commonly employed and

administrative understandings of disability are positivistic medical discourses aimed at rehabilitating or curing impairment in order to bring the individual to a perceived state of normality—a state misrepresented as being widespread and representative throughout society. In Aileen Wight Felske's (1994) article entitled *Knowing About Knowing*, positivism in disability research is said to operate on the assumption that:

Disability is a deficit, a problem in the individual who must be rehabilitated. This view of the individual in need of medical "fixing" holds whether the impairment is physical or intellectual, temporary or lifelong. The positivist view holds that there is only one true reality and a careful application of the rules of observation, comparable to the methodology of the natural sciences, will produce the necessary theoretical constructs to predict and control events, to produce a 'cure' (p182-3).

Robert F. Drake (1996) writes that "the predominant view of disability is one informed overwhelmingly by medicine" (p.148). He elaborates upon this by stating that, "from the medical perspective, people are disabled as a result of their individual physiological or cognitive impairments" (p.148-9). Medical discourses frame curative or rehabilitative responses as the only legitimate way of attending to the social phenomenon that is impairment. Such processes aim only to remediate disabled people in order to reconstitute them in a 'normal' state of mental and physical functioning. The notion of normalcy is often represented in a way that makes it appear to refer to a natural, fundamental or essential state of existence, rather than an expression of power laden values within a specific contextual and historical space. This is further demonstrated by Drake (1996) when he states that "'normality', far from describing some natural or preordained state of affairs, instead represents an acknowledgement of the values which have come to dominate in a particular community at any given time. The formation of 'normality' thus results from—and represents—an exercise of power" (p.145). Not only

do such discourses have the effect of devaluing individuals deemed disabled, excluding them from any legitimate participation in the social sphere, they propagate a very significant and deleterious imperative for the remainder of society: that is, one which places pressure on people to maintain and continuously justify their own normalcy. As Lennard Davis (2002) states in the conclusion of his article *Bodies of Difference: Politics, Disability and Representation*:

Society continues, groaning to single out disability as the other and to define itself by that other. Whether we are talking about AIDS, low-birth-weight babies, special education issues, euthanasia, and the thousand other topics listed in the newspapers every day, the examination, discussion, anatomizing of this form of difference is nothing less than people's desperate attempt to consolidate their normality (p.105).

Disability is but a single tangent in the underlying social impulse to annex the territory of legitimate (normal) identity, and in doing so, expunge any manifestation of the non-standard (abnormal) from society. This discursively based social analysis is drawn from the writings of Georges Canguilhem (1978), Michelle Foucault (1961; 1970; 1972; 1980; 1988) and as evidenced above, from the more overtly disability focussed work of Lennard J. Davis (1995; 2002). The latter argues in *Enforcing Normalcy* that there was no concept of normalcy prior to the nineteenth century. He claims that the culturally shared sense of the normal that is today imposed upon our every thought and action, was replaced by a sense of the ideal—a cultural paradigm having a very different effect on the social character of the time. In fact the word normal itself did not surface in English until roughly the 1850s and in French until somewhere in the early the 1800s (Davis, 2002)—before this point there appears not to have been such a concept. The crux of Davis' argument is as follows: If there exists a sense of the ideal rather than the

normal, then all humans dwell somewhere within the spectrum below the idealized and as such are variously imperfect. “No one . . . for example, can have an ideal body, and therefore no one has to have an ideal body” (p.106). It is only with the advent of statistics—most importantly their application to the social Darwinian project of eugenics—that the idea of the norm begins to take hold within society.

As this gradual transformation in the perception of the collective self begins to take hold, the majority of people are seen to fall within the median range of the bell or normal curve while those who inhabit the margins of the curve begin to be seen as abnormal. This in turn generates significant pressure upon the populace, in the form of a palpable anxiety to embody this fundamental concept. Davis (2002) illustrates this transformation for us saying that, “instead of being resigned to a less than ideal body in the earlier paradigm, people in the past 150 years have been encouraged to strive to be normal, to huddle under the main part of the curve” (p.101). He even goes so far as to assert, echoing Foucault, that in order for the creation of the modern democratic capitalist nation state as we have come to know it, fundamental social practices and even bodies themselves had to be standardized, homogenized and normalized. For it is these pervasive, web-like forms of governance that would gradually come to take the place of the juridical, martially empowered rule of the monarchy.

From Abstraction to Effect

The veracity of such statements is suggested in the continual cycle of disabling discourses into custom, action, policy and practice, and back into the collective consciousness—a transformation that is existent and demonstrable within many aspects of contemporary western society. It flows from the abstract realm of socially embedded

ableist⁶ ideas, to the micro-practices⁷ of which our daily existence is comprised. The explicit social functioning of such a cycle is demonstrated in recent Canadian policy documents such as the publication entitled: *Defining Disability: A complex issue*. This document, designed to “assist the Government of Canada in improving the understanding of its key disability programs, and to help clarify the differences between definitions, objectives and eligibility criteria as they relate to those initiatives” (Canada, 2003, p.4), has a tangible impact upon social institutions essential in maintaining what many would consider a basic standard of existence. This not only includes activities of daily living, but also initiatives ensuring for assistance in the home, income, employment and education. While acknowledging that numerous perspectives do exist with regards to what are often termed disability issues, and that even the meaning of the term itself remains highly negotiable, it states that “most disability programs and benefits in Canada, including many described in this [document], focus on medically certified impairments. As a result, the data they collect and use are largely based on the medical model” (p.9). Given that such programs are underpinned by persuasive historically derived, collectively reified ways of knowing disability, it is vital that we reveal the obfuscated traces of power that animate them.

Simi Linton (1998) provides convincing and impassioned testimony as to why this is such a critical project in the lives of disabled people and for western society as a whole, stating that:

⁶ According to Davis (1996), “ableist is a political term used by people with disabilities to call attention to assumptions made about normalcy” (p.172).

⁷ “Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power explicitly shifts analyses of power from the ‘macro’ realm of structures and ideologies to the ‘micro’ level of bodies. Foucault argues that unlike the sovereign power of earlier periods, disciplinary power functions at the level of the body” (Gore, 1998, p.233).

Disabled people . . . are a group only recently entering everyday civic life. A host of factors have typically screened us from public view. We have been hidden—whether in the institutions that have confined us, the attics and basements that sheltered our family’s shame, the ‘special’ schools and classrooms designed to solve the problems we are thought to represent, or riding in segregated transportation, those ‘invalid’ coaches, that shuttle disabled people from one of these venues to another. The public has gotten so used to these screens that as we are now emerging . . . we disrupt the social order. We further confound expectations when we have the temerity to emerge as forthright and resourceful people, nothing like the self loathing, docile, bitter, or insentient fictional versions of ourselves the public is used to (p.3).

How then, in light of such testimony, have we the public so unanimously arrived at this—a constrained and narrow conception of what is ostensibly a complex, multifaceted concept? How has it developed into a wider social impulse, gradually expanding over time, subject to the push and pull of certain sorts of cultural practices and social currents? Most importantly, how might such an understanding be altered?

Barnes & Mercer (2003) state that until recently there have been very few writers who have attempted to provide insight into the historical basis for current disabling orientations towards disability, and those that have either “stress the continuity of negative attitudes and practices towards those with perceived impairments” (p.22), or “concentrate . . . on improvements brought about by philanthropy, scientific medicine, social welfare, and educational policies” (p.23). Historical accounts often begin in ancient Greco-Roman traditions whose idealization of the body and practice of infanticide for those with detectable impairments, provides a fertile place from which to initiate such narratives. Biblical texts and paintings depicting disability as a punitive response for past sins or as the work of the devil provide further corroboration for the representation of disability in the common mind, as a resoundingly negative historical phenomenon. The sense of certainty with which such polarized depictions of disability

are presented in these and other such historical narratives can be seen to occur as a result of the discursively regulated positions occupied by those who produce them. Reified understandings of disability work to force these explanations away from their lived complexity and towards the boundaries of society. Into progress gained through medical and psychological rehabilitation, abandonments and sterilizations where disability is seen to rightly belong. Unsurprisingly Canadian Government policy statements have proven to be no exception, occupying the same conceptual terrain. According to Titchkosky (2003), such statements are based upon and surrounded by a long lineage of documents and surveys articulated through various texts, pamphlets, web sites, press releases, and interim reports including Canada: 2001, 2000, 1996, 1995, 1981 (p.3). The crushing discursive weight of such programmatic responses to the perceived 'problem' of disability, as constituted by the administrative governmental bodies responsible for such matters, is consistently borne upon the backs of the disabled. Historical accounts possessing adequate theoretical sophistication or empirical grounding would, in this case, seem to have been commonly passed over in favour of a distinct conceptual uniformity and rhetorical simplicity.

Such histories, if they are understood to be somewhat incomplete, power laden representations of that which they claim to depict, are able to provide important contextual detail to our inquiry of the discursive management of bodies of knowledge surrounding disability in western society. Throughout the remainder of this discussion, I attempt to draw together what I think are some of the more cogent aspects of existing historical accounts of disability. This is intended to provide the reader with a sense of the significant amount of struggle and negotiation that lies behind critical social models of

disability in their attempts to diverge from widely employed medical and individual deficit models. In examining the bodies of knowledge charged with producing such a set of debilitating and pervasive social forces, and by extension effects, it is useful to consider previous manifestations of a similar phenomenon. Historical practices, attitudes and beliefs, if viewed critically, can provide useful insights, often revealing clues to past modes of disablement and enablement that possess both similarities with, and profound differences from those commonly occurring in contemporary society. Such past social practices form a discursive lineage that has both been maintained by, and altered modern disabling practice, moulding it, shaping it and being re-shaped by it. Again, it is certain that “our current common attitudes, particularly, fear, rejection, fascination, ridicule and pity . . . do not arise in a vacuum” (Shapiro, 2000, p.145). Throughout the Twentieth century, disability has been thought of in overwhelmingly negative terms: as flaw, deficiency, weakness, abnormality, deviance, tragedy, horror, and in countless other pejorative ways.

Origins

I have thus far explained how the disabling impulse has been written throughout the social body and inscribed within the collective consciousness, but what are its origins? Where has it been derived from? How has the disabling impulse changed? What was/is its function? Social theorists have looked primarily to medical and scientific models to define and understand disability. Despite new interest in disability as a potential civil rights issue, the common understanding of it continues to be informed by a constructed difference from a ‘normal’ body, a difference stemming from an orthodoxy based in scientized, medical knowledge centring the disability exclusively within the

individual and framing it in terms of a deficit or deviance to be remediated. How have such myths and misconceptions become so entrenched within both our culture and our shared social bodies of knowledge?

In part of an article dealing with disability in western culture before industrialisation, Colin Barnes (1996) writes that “the existence of impairment is as old as the human body and the earliest known societies: it is a human constant” (p.49). It is easy to extrapolate upon the continued presence of disability throughout the history of civilization and in numerous cultural, temporal and social contexts. It is more a rule of human existence than an exception. The historical origins of both our restricted knowledge of disability and our more recent programmatic, narrowly conceived attempts to solve the problem of exclusion, begin by some accounts, “in the late seventeenth century where ‘the disabled’ first becomes a term for the interpretive organization, management, and control of groups of people rendered ‘the deserving poor’” (Titchkosky, 2004, p.3). Others locate its origins in much earlier social contexts ranging from Babylonian and Egyptian customs having to do with children born with impairments, the Greco-Roman pursuit of bodily perfection, acceptance of infanticide, and their widespread social exclusion of the disabled. While it is difficult to pin down the precise origins of our current practice, we can see the reflection of such responses in our own society demonstrated by practices such as euthanasia, abortion, educational streaming and IQ testing. Arthur Shapiro (2000) sums up our motivation for casting our gaze backwards in his lengthy study on early attitudes towards disability writing that: “the study of history can never fruitfully be an end in itself. Rather, it forms part of a discourse between the past and the present, whose purpose is to measure cultural distance

and difference, as well as to establish cultural similarity and identity” (p.145). Yet regardless of ‘actual’ origins, these practices do surface, cycled in and out of our shared cultural epistemologies muting and mutating the ways that we are able to regard disability. It is this slow dialogue, this whispered evolution of thought, sense, feeling and custom, that so subtly informs the present. Lennard Davis (2002) provides us with a sense of this development writing that:

When we think about normality, people . . . have generally made the error . . . of confining our discussions more or less exclusively to impairment and disease. But I think there is really a larger picture that includes disability along with any nonstandard behaviours. Language usage . . . has become subject to an enforcement of normalcy, as have sexuality, gender, racial identity, national identity, and so on. As Canguilhem writes, ‘there is no difference between the birth of grammatical norms . . . and the establishment of the metric system . . . It began with grammatical norms and ended with morphological norms of men and horses for national defense, passing through industrial and sanitary norms (p.104).

In Barnes (1996) view, disability and its attendant debilitating social effects are produced by the same material and cultural forces responsible for creating ideals of able-bodiedness (p.43). Drawing on the primarily cultural-anthropologically oriented analysis of Tom Shakespeare, Barnes writes that the history of disability has created and enshrined discourses that work to objectify the disabled relegating them to the societal position of perennial other (p.48). “[Shakespeare] suggests that the cultural roots of disabled people’s oppression in western society predates the emergence of capitalism (p.49), an analysis that runs counter to many of the materially deterministic theories that have abounded in disability studies and in social science in general. In his view, it is not only necessary to examine the economic and political determinants of disablement, it is also critical to affect a more comprehensive analysis—one that takes into account the role

of cultural structures implicit in representation, language and in socialization (p.48). Disability studies and critical social science in general, attempt to construct and disseminate alternative epistemologies through which to understand the experience of disablement. In such emerging paradigms disabled people, elderly women, Aboriginal people and members of ethnic minorities, “ have been marginalized in terms of their material goods, their memberships and roles in the social sphere and in their ownership of knowledge . . . Their experiences, although different in origin, share an increasingly recognized commonality: they are all without power” (Ware, 2004, p.192). Despite such critical advances in the comprehension of the multifarious character of disability, socio-political transformation, even within the realm of attitudes and perceptions, remains a localized phenomenon, with little or no widespread change appearing imminent.

One of the primary reasons for this lack of advancement is that such explanations attempt primarily to account for only a single aspect of the social reality of living with a disability (the medical impairment itself or the exclusionary effect of disablement), but all too rarely endeavour to probe those underlying determinants that account for a variety of social effects and incarnations that are not located in the body. Barnes, Oliver and Barton (1999) state that, “while this work recognize[s] the significance of economic, social and cultural factors in the production of disability, the causes of the wide-spread economic and social deprivation encountered by disabled people [are too frequently] located within the individual and their impairment” (p.4).

The detrimental effects of understanding complex phenomena such as disability solely through restricted knowledges (or what might be thought of as uni-focal lenses) are widely enumerated. These lenses work to ensure that those charged with attending to the

problem of promoting equality as well as to the society at large, rarely even consider what Carol Thomas (2002) describes as: “the issues of pressing concern to many disabled people: independent living, poverty, employment, education, communication, transportation, accessing built environments and civil rights” (p.44). The dire and pressing necessity for policy makers and the wider social sphere, “to engage with the idea that disability is a form of social oppression, something that they are happy to contemplate in other sets of social relationships” (p.44), is circumvented ad infinitum through the unseen regulation and production of common knowledge by discursive power. Paradoxically, this is often done in the name of benevolence, care, aid, generosity, and in the sphere of education—inclusion. These embedded, interlocking discourses of governance operate pervasively throughout the entire social fabric without exception. In spheres whose explicit role is the amelioration of human oppression and restriction, these embedded directives create a range of disjunctive effects—effects that are, paradoxically incongruous with the stated aims of such humanizing social institutions. It is a complex and pervasive social reality having constant and lasting detrimental effects on disabled people throughout society. By accepting and internalizing these sorts of epistemological boundaries, public discourse and the collective social consciousness is left in a state of acute social blindness to the complexity and breadth of the disablement present within western society. Moreover, such discourses work to exclude, normalize, and ultimately disadvantage disabled individuals even in programmatic attempts to help them.

Inquiry into disability is so consigned to the terrain of bio-medical deviance and is in turn so pervasively conceived of in such terms, that it is exceedingly difficult to

counterbalance the sheer mass of discursive power set to shape and process our social knowledge—as initiatives towards inclusion attempt to do. The more readily discernible effect of this silent process is that disability becomes widely equated with aberrance and the disabled public are marginalized, disempowered and in a great many cases, universally excluded from so-called ‘public’ life. This is justified by a continuous appeal to such the discursive power that I have just discussed, discourses that work to process and streamline socially embedded knowledge in order to substantiate and legitimize such exclusions, making them appear, in many cases, beneficial to the disabled individual, to families, and to society itself.

The Construal of Disability as Deficit

Tanya Titchkosky (2003) explains this effect in terms of “technologies by which individuals and populations are constituted as a problem, and serve also as the means through which collective relations to this problem are governed” (p.3). Disability, through its appeal to and support by such discourses of disablement (disabling impulses), is considered a universally understood medical ‘reality,’ a tragic fact of life, and is therefore left virtually unexamined in all ways save those medical or charitable. These all too commonly held beliefs propagate the paternalistic notion that disabled people cannot be other than socially dependent, having little or nothing in the way of redeeming or socially legitimate qualities with which to contribute to society. The extent to which they are thought able to exist is contingent upon the extent to which society is able to relieve them of their impairments with medicines and adaptive aids, and reduce their disablement through social support and other charitable, practices (Gleeson, 1999, p.31).

Barnes (1996) and numerous others have criticized such perspectives for their insistence that all societies respond to disability negatively. In general, dominant scientific thought at the turn of the nineteenth century, particularly liberal utilitarian and social Darwinist, has maintained that societies where survival is precarious those members of society whose weakness or dependence place the greater population in jeopardy will be excised. In opposition to this Barnes finds “ample anthropological evidence that all societies do not respond to impairment in exactly the same way” (p.49), and provides a number of cogent examples to support his case. For example, he describes two communities where “survival is extremely hazardous yet people with impairments remain valued members of the community” (p.50). He goes on to relate a recorded account of the Dalegura, a group of Australian Aborigines in whose society infanticide was prohibited, age was considered a sign of respect and individuals with impairments were not dealt with negatively. Contrary to predominating narratives, “the Dalegura took turns carrying a woman throughout her lifetime because she had never been able to walk. She was 65 years old when she died” (p.50). This observation, while doing little to alter the fact that many societies, past and present, conceive of disability in overwhelmingly negative terms, it does provide a useful starting point from which to begin to illuminate the possibility of an alternative within this discursive terrain. Responses to disabled people and to impairment itself cannot be understood with reference to monothetical narratives, or uni-focal theories. They are produced through a complex and interactive range of factors occurring within society. They are produced in certain ways at very particular historical and temporal moments. It is from such a point of critical self-reflexivity that our society might begin to affect a widespread

reconceptualization of this culturally embedded body knowledge and a rehabilitation of the reality of disability itself within western society.

Such widely held beliefs are being called into question and refuted on a variety of different grounds. One of the most significant theoretical departures from the orthodox view, in my mind, is what has been referred to as the 'social model of disability'. The social model of disability stems from the idea that there exists a distinction between impairment (described in terms of the purely biological absence or malfunctioning of a part of the individual) and disability (thought to be a socially imposed state of governance, exclusion, oppression or constraint which impaired individuals may be forced to endure) (Oliver in Gleeson, 1999, p.25). Commonly held notions of disability have been revised and, as Carol Thomas (2002) states, "the term 'disability' now refers to a type of social oppression, and disablement enters the vocabulary alongside sexism, racism and other discriminatory practices" (p.39). By reconceptualizing orthodox models of disability in such a way, the focus is shifted from a medically articulated impairment located in the individual to a more comprehensive social examination. An important aspect of this conceptual shift is that, while medical interpretations of specific impairment may be subsumed within or developed in concordance with social models, they are not relied upon as the sole means of knowing disability and do not rely on claims of essentiality, fundamentality, or naturalness. Drake (1996) sums this situation up admirably stating that, "from this perspective, people are disabled not by their physical or mental impairments, but by the configuration of a society designed by, and for, non-disabled people" (p.149). This is often a difficult realization for the general populace to come to as it involves recognising the extent to which these are in fact alterable social

responses. Involved in this is often an admittance of a certain amount of complicity in the continuance of a hostile and pervasive state of social oppression. The social model then, is an attempt to force that portion of the population who are not identified as disabled to consider the oppressive aspects of the social, political, and built environment.

This social model of disability, as I have alluded to in the previous chapter, is the socio-political turn that opened the door for a significant reorientation of the way disability was to be understood. Focussing on the way such effects as social oppression exclusion, socio-economic marginalization and dependence were thought to be constructed, “disabled individuals and groups began to self organize to resist” (Thomas, 2002, p.39). Insights such as these, “coupled with the radicalization of young disabled Americans in the Movement for Independent Living (ILM) [helped] to usher in what Mike Oliver later termed the above mentioned ‘social model’ of disability” (Barnes in Barton, 1996, 44). In this newfound view it became possible to shed light upon the structures in contemporary society that produce such disabling discourses. As a result it is then also possible to affect a revision/re-envisioning of orthodox and pervasively held belief systems that had up until that time seemed natural or fundamental aspects of life, even to many disabled people themselves.

Freedom from the belief that disablement stems from ‘natural’ limitations of the impaired individual and not from socially engendered exclusions or constraints has had a profound effect upon the debate over the nature and workings of disability, particularly for disabled people, scholars of disability and activist groups for disabled rights. Carol Thomas writes that, “the social model of disability is the rallying call for disability organizations identifying with the disabled people’s movement” (Thomas, 2002, p.40). She goes on to

make the rather profound claim that, “when disabled individuals encounter the social model, the effect is often revelatory and liberatory, enabling them, perhaps for the first time, to recognize most of their difficulty as socially caused. Disabling barriers in all areas of life come into view—in housing, education, employment, transport, cultural and leisure activities, health and welfare services, civil and political rights, and elsewhere” (p.40).

The social model set the stage for a widespread excavation of socio-political and environmental barriers targeted as pervasively disabling forces that interacted with the individual’s impairment to restrict and govern their range of available economic, political, and social options. Such politicized social analyses of disability work to oppose and problematize what have been termed personal tragedy models of disability (Barnes & Mercer, p.18), supplanting them with politicized social models. While orthodox understandings of disability locate inequities experienced by disabled people within the individual themselves, social models of disability argue that individuals with impairments are disabled by society’s failure to adequately understand, accept and accommodate them. Barnes, Oliver and Barton (2002) write that,

this approach does not deny the significance of impairment in disabled people’s lives, but concentrates instead on the various barriers, economic, political and social, constructed on top of impairment. Thus disability is not a product of individual failings, but is socially created; explanations of its changing character are found in the organization and structures of society. Rather than identifying disability as an individual limitation, the social model identifies society as the problem, and looks to fundamental political and cultural changes to generate solutions (p.5).

Chapter 3. Reification or How we Came to Know Disability

Although the social phenomenon that has come to be known as disability has not always been understood in the same way, either historically or in contemporary times, it has since the time of the enlightenment come primarily under the sway of medical and scientific discourses. These discourses construe impairment primarily as a problem or deficit and aim to fix or eradicate it by way of social practices such as psychology, social work, rehabilitation, psychiatry and the medical and education systems. For the most part, those involved in carrying out such practices and those whose lived reality they so fundamentally effect have tended to view this relationship and the conclusions implicit within it as a logical or even natural condition of life. More recently, such seemingly beneficial relationships have been questioned as to their totalizing hold over the 'truth' of disability. There has been a serious mistrust with regard to the overwhelming authority of medical knowledge as well as a discontent that has been expressed with all aspects of a social order that has facilitated and maintained a cultural knowledge of disability with such overwhelmingly negative effects. As certain groups begin to view disability as the result of a social phenomenon rather than as an inalterable aspect of a 'real' or 'natural' world attempts to formulate new ways of knowing disability have become increasingly more frequent and have been marked by greater theoretical sophistication. Gary Woodill (1994) sums this up writing that, "because the meaning of disability can be seen as social creation, rather than designating a fixed and 'natural' condition, the way is open for a change in the current meaning of disability through an analysis and reinvention of the way that disability is portrayed" (p.203). It is unfortunate, however, to note that such knowledge remains far from widespread throughout western society, even despite such

theoretical advances in the field of disability and what have appeared to be advances made in other areas (civil rights, queer rights and gender equity). It is my belief that such social transformation has failed to materialize in any appreciable way as a result of discourses of disablement that remain embodied in the very fabric of society—managing, conditioning and controlling the ways that we are able (or at least likely) to experience this social phenomenon.

To Know How Disability is Produced

In order to examine and illuminate the social impulse responsible for the widespread devaluation of disabled people throughout contemporary western society, and in order to further understand the relationship between those readily perceivable abuses and oppressions that exist within this social order and the far less perceptible discourses that animate them, it is necessary to paint what might be a tenable picture of the workings of the structures embodied therein. It is through such theorizing and through such generative pursuits, that we may encourage a more comprehensive examination of the disabling impulse: a historic lineage of knowledge and practice relying on the translation of obfuscated currents of power into generalized social impulses that are dispersed throughout the social body in the form of shared knowledge, eventually producing wide ranging and largely unquestioned material, psychological, and social detriments. It is my aim then to consider how such an impulse and its debilitating effects might inhere itself so pervasively within the social consciousness, particularly in a way that is commonly left unconsidered and uncontested. Tanya Titchkosky (2003) sums this endeavour up with much acuity stating that it is of great necessity “to know how disability is produced as a problem in need of remedy, to know how, for example, disability is given shape as

an excluded population” (p.2), “to maintain a critical focus on how and to what end disability is constituted as it is” (p.2), and to invoke a greater realization that “disabled people are made to matter as excluded and marginalized and this is what disability comes to mean” (p.2). To think of it another way we might consider that the management of the very notion of disability has left so little conceptual space in the shared consciousness for people identified as disabled that few legitimate identities are available save those in the familiar tune of patient, victim, sufferer, tragedy, monstrosity and the like. Unlike less constrained identities that are seen to have more room for the negotiation of their character (able-bodied, sound-minded, white, males of middle to upper class), the crushing weight of historical precedent that provides a widespread medical authority over the cognitive social terrain that is disability, leaves precious little space for meaningful challenge or negotiation. Susan Wendell (1996) writes that:

How a society defines disability and whom it recognizes as disabled are of enormous psychological, social, economic and political importance . . . [it] also reveal[s] a great deal about the society’s attitudes and expectations concerning the body, what it stigmatizes and what it considers ‘normal’ in physical appearance and importance, what activities it takes to be necessary and/ or valuable and for whom, and its assumptions about gender, age, race, caste, and class . . . (p.32).

She goes on to make the observation that, given the right social arrangement, the homogeneous term *disability* would fail to have meaning or use. In addition to this she states that the reason for defining such a term stems from the need for that society to identify those who require a certain amount of provision in order to develop their potential or to participate in the society itself. This circumstance can be seen to apply, not just to people with impairments, but to all members of society. If this can indeed be thought of as the case, the term disability then,

becomes obsolete—too specific to identify those requiring support in order to maintain a basic standard of living and too general to identify what kind of supports are needed.

How, in light of such a realization, might we explain the integration of discourses of disablement into the widespread and commonly internalized bodies of knowledge that direct and motivate social practice? What social impulse might account for such an unremitting, widespread expulsion of those deemed mentally abnormal from the bounds of normality and legitimacy, and what are some of the ways in which this impulse is inscribed within the collective consciousness? How, in turn, are these discourses disseminated throughout the social body by seemingly benevolent institutions such as the education system? How does the modern school reproduce and reinforce distinct forms of knowledge surrounding the very notion of disability itself, and how does it work both to construct and delimit disabled identities? What is the character and configuration of these social epistemologies, and how have their effects been reified and obfuscated in ways that make them either disappear from the public eye or appear a natural aspect of everyday life? In what ways do culturally constituted relations of power delineate the terms by which normality and abnormality exist, and in what way are these terms then proliferated throughout the social body? Finally, what are the consequences of a homogenizing society and an education system that reflects and reproduces this social orientation, inscribing bodily, mentally, psychologically, spatially, temporally, and in myriad other ways various states of normality, abnormality, legitimacy or illegitimacy on its participants?

Re-Theorization

In order to address such questions it becomes increasingly necessary, as I mentioned earlier, to unravel widely held beliefs and practices through their theorization or, in fact, through their re-theorization. I say re-theorization because, while it may appear that daily practices and widely accepted beliefs are devoid of theory, it is rather that they rely on an un-stated theory that is rarely, if ever, made explicit in popular discourse. Official discourses tend only to justify the status quo, a problematic condition when one believes, as many do, that the status quo and the theoretical position it inhabits is largely responsible for an incalculable lineage of oppression and inequity. It is the goal of works such as this one to provide alternative positions wherein those who fail to wholly accept orthodox positions may be enabled to reorient their self knowledge as well as their knowledge of society. It also remains necessary to encourage and foster suspicion, critique and thought which diverges from the orthodox views of social reality so that such re-theorizations may at some point be useful in a more direct sense. Sheila Riddell (1996) considers why this might be necessary, writing that, “in order to challenge existing power relations, it is important to render theory explicit and offer alternative interpretations of how things are and how they might be” (p.83). Although this process is of the utmost necessity, if the potential for recurrent abuses and oppressions is to be removed, very little change is likely to occur without an alteration of the foundational knowledge underpinning the current social order. It becomes a formidable challenge to transmit these alternative epistemologies to the populace to such an extent that any large number of people might find it undesirable to maintain their existence in the current state of relative mystification and indifference.

Widespread social knowledge of categories such as disability continues to exist in the way that it does, at least where socio-political analysis is concerned, for primarily one reason—reification. Although there are a multitude of permutations of this generalized effect given different contextual variables, the collective social mind is, a reifying one. According to Timothy Bewes (2002) “reification refers to the moment that a process or relation is generalized into an abstraction, and thereby turned into a ‘thing’” (p.3). In the case of disability, those of us who have not had the opportunity to know someone designated in this way might come to understand the complex lived reality which is embodied therein simply as acutely different from themselves. While this social process may take various shapes depending on contextual detail, the process of taking a multifaceted concept and substituting a conceptual shorthand remains. In a situation where this process occurs near infinitely, reinforced throughout all manner of institutions, media, daily practice and what is called ‘common knowledge’ a restrictive consensus occurs. Be this as it may, the way that a society knows, includes, excludes, legitimizes, divides, manages, or oppresses is often of little importance to those who fall squarely within the confines of normality, for they are rarely subject to the strongest pull of such effects. It is infinitely more significant however, to those who are more directly at the mercy of these processes for the provision of their basic needs. The remainder of the population, who are governed by the same underlying currents of power, yet have been provided with no impetus to become aware of this, are likely to remain indifferent as long as no significant aspect of their lives is altered. Unfortunately, whether or not a very large number of people who are forced to dwell in a reified state within the common imagination are considered valuable to the society, permissible, or even worth keeping

alive at all hinges upon it. The categories and distinctions upon which we found our banishments and our inclusions, our beliefs and our disbeliefs, have a deep and profound effect upon all of us, they are never wholly our own, and we must consider whether or not they are worthy of our support.

These divisions . . . are always themselves reflexive categories, principles of classification, normative rules, institutionalized types: they, in turn, are facts of discourse that deserve to be analysed beside others . . . they also have complex relations with each other, but they are not intrinsic, autochthonous, and universally recognizable characteristics (Foucault, 1972, p.22).

What is expressed in the previous quotation is the author's sense that the knowledge used to create and privilege certain coherencies and orders (truths) that explain the world (such as those common beliefs drawn from medical knowledge) are neither natural nor fundamental. Such knowledge scripts and conditions the way that reality takes shape, even with regard to the way that we view something as seemingly familiar as our own bodies and we must be wary, or at least aware, of their dictates. Irving Kenneth Zola (1994) writes that "medicine is becoming a major institution of social control, nudging aside, if not incorporating, the more traditional institutions of religion and law". He even goes so far as to state that, "it is becoming the new repository of truth" (p.118). While this works to confound meritocratic narratives that rely upon ideals of individualism and hard work for their optimistic forecasts of society, it does reflect a burgeoning suspicion centred upon totalizing bodies of knowledge claiming too strongly to have a hold on objective knowledge.

Knowing

The act of knowing is perhaps one of the most frequently referred to, yet simultaneously indeterminate processes that we have made a part of our daily existence.

It is something that seems readily understandable, yet steadfastly resists attempts to clearly delineate its character. While there are many things that one might feel they know, or that one might act as if they know, it is a much more difficult prospect to consider how and why something might come to be known and what the consequences of knowing it in that particular way might be. What do we mean when we say that we know what something is? From where do we derive our response to a particular group or type of person? How does the social weight of combined collective knowledge determine the character of that which it refers to by virtue of a mass consensus reflected and rehearsed in every facet of society? Knowing might be variously understood as: perception, cognition, understanding, recognition, similitude, previous knowledge, an acquaintance or familiarity with, being or having to do with, experience, awareness of truth or factuality, certainty, simply to be convinced of, as well as a multitude of other variations of this sort. It is strange then that we often express our perceived knowledge with the utmost certitude despite its uncertain origins and obscured character.

The act of knowing has been described both as instantaneous and as a process, as deep and as superficial, as intuitive and as learned. How might we more clearly comprehend something with such an incongruous character as this, a process that remains elusive, yet inextricably tied to our most basic thoughts, feelings, beliefs and actions? This *process* of knowing is related in a very fundamental way to that which we vehemently proclaim to know by virtue of our actions, thoughts, feelings and opinions, yet there would seem to be a lack of certainty, a collective forgetting, a grey area, a conceptual blank surrounding the genesis of such elemental knowledge. How is it possible that we fail to know ourselves in such a seemingly familiar way and how might

this provide clues as to the manner in which we might have come to this knowledge?
Might it be borne with us rather than having being born with us and is it something that we desire to bear?

While at first glance this may appear as nothing more than an overwrought endeavour in self-examination, such strains of thought are of critical importance to the pursuit of human equity, particularly given the character of our current social order.

If we shift the focus of our discussion slightly, from a consideration of *what* we know (and *if* we know), to a consideration of *how we have come to know*, it might prove possible to shed some light upon a seemingly familiar, yet enigmatically shrouded, aspect of our daily existence. In order to do so it is necessary that we disentangle what Timothy Bewes (2002) refers to as, “a ‘man made’ reality which appears to man to be a natural phenomenon” (p.7) but which is much more likely the consequence of a number of distinct social conditions, frozen in the collective mind of western culture. These embedded beliefs (the noble poor, the stoic war amputee, the helpless cripple), while fictive, have constitutive effects on real human beings. How is it that within our society we have come to share a whole range of beliefs about the world, about reality, many of which are socially harmful, individually debilitating, environmentally destructive, racist, and can be seen to operate upon dubious claims to authority. The answer to this question, it would seem, is to be sought in the metamorphosis of power relations in capitalist societies. While we do not exist within the explicit control of a violent and oppressive state, there are other socio-cultural mechanisms that delimit, conceal, and direct, a wide range of very familiar, seemingly fixed, cultural effects including our shared meanings, that which we think of as constituting truth, and as an effect of such discourses our very

identities. It is through these socially embedded discourses and their obfuscated power effects that the plausibility of subjective interior resistance or resistance stemming from within the individual (Bewes, 2002) and the likelihood of equality, choice, fairness, acceptance, and other forms of social equity are negated at a very basic level. How then does this occur on such a widespread basis and how do we blind ourselves from it so successfully and so utterly?

Reification

The concept of reification originated as a metaphor for the effect which capitalism has had on people's understandings of themselves and the world, but is useful in describing the general arrangement of the broader social impulse of which I have been speaking. The word reification in a very basic sense might be explained as the imbueing of a thingly quality to that which is not itself a thing. It is the product of a world so removed from its own basic processes and from its sense of itself, it is a world so mediated, that the objective world if indeed one ever existed, has become indistinguishable from that which has been constructed to understand it. In Bewes (2002) own words it refers to the generation of a 'phantom objectivity', meaning that a human creation—an institution or an ideology say—takes on the character of 'a force that controls human beings' (p.4). In the case of widespread popular understandings of disability, which is my particular interest here, a social shorthand is created in order to transform what is a multifaceted heterogeneous complex of lived factors into a single monofaceted thing—a thing that is easily understood, binarily oppositional, manageable, predictable and readily identifiable on a large scale. To quote Bewes at length:

Reification is what happens in every instance of racism and sexism, where the objects of prejudice are perceived not as human beings but as

things or 'types.' It is what happens in 'property booms', when houses are turned into investment opportunities rather than places of residence; or in situations of modern warfare, when a complex of competing state interests is represented as a force for 'good' . . . In each case, reification is the process in which 'thing-hood' becomes the standard of objective reality; the 'given world', in other words, is taken to be the truth of the world (Bewes, 2002, p.4)

One of my primary objectives throughout the course of this work has been to inquire as to why the inhabitants of western capitalist societies so commonly and so uniformly consider certain social phenomena, such as that of disability, to be negative while considering certain others to be resoundingly positive? Disability is at its base, just one in a range of possible incarnations of bio-medical circumstance and social practice. Why in a world where difference is much more the norm than is similitude, has this particular difference been deemed so resoundingly negative? If asked, many of us would likely say that we know what disability is, or what a disabled person is. What does this mean, where does this stem from, and what effect does this have on those people who we profess to know? We might also say that we felt we had a certain, at least limited or speculative knowledge of our role in the phenomenon we know as disability (often sympathetic onlooker). And while these statements may be true in a certain sense, it is my feeling that we have yet to achieve, nor does it seem that we are interested in achieving, the necessary cultural reflexivity to effectively comprehend and articulate the complex character of either disability or the effects of our knowledge on those who live with it. I would argue that while we do possess certain widely employed notions of these complex lived realities, that this is simply a reified way of knowing what is actually a much more intricate web of social practice. Such beliefs work as a kind of metanarrative

strategy or conceptual shorthand that is substituted for the true complexity of the individual circumstance.

Language is often a good indicator of such relationships of power as certain sorts of linguistic conventions can be seen to be motivated and informed by power borne social constructs. Arthur Shapiro (2000) writes in his consideration of the effects of language upon those deemed disabled that, “attitudes toward people with disabilities are often embedded in language. Language, after all, is the architecture of our thoughts and a primary conveyor of a culture and its attitudes. It both expresses ideas and concepts and shapes them” (p.37). If this is in fact the case, as Shapiro asserts, then there is certainly a glut of terminology that might be used to describe the mentally abnormal, all equally derisive. In fact, there is an abundance of words in the English language used to characterize those deemed disabled, abnormal, or aberrant in a resoundingly negative light. The notion that language could be, as both Shapiro (2000) and Wilson & Liewieki-Wilson (2001) propose, constitutive of social practices is one which the average Canadian might be unwilling to consider for too long amidst the certitude of ‘real’ daily existence. Yet while there are numerous ways of referring to those deemed mentally abnormal there remains little place for these individuals within the lived realm of that existence. Rather than allowing for their participation within the realm of ‘normal’ society, great numbers of these people have been relegated to the extreme social margins proliferate within halfway homes, prisons, addiction centres, hospitals, and upon street corners. Despite the fact that they are occasionally referred to—often with pity, discomfort, or derision—they are all too rarely conferred with. Forces of socially engendered segregation such as these create a position of confinement for individuals

perceived to have a disability, stripping them of the culturally derived power necessary to determine their own existence within the wider social sphere. Such pervasive social exclusion does not occur without pretext, and belies a wider cultural orientation towards disability.

Our linguistic representations are but one easily identifiable manifestation of this social impulse—they are an emergent strand of a web-like network of discursive structures⁸, obscured from the popular eye, yet enacting a silent form of governance—over bodies, perceptions, knowledge, beliefs, and actions. In the words of Michel Foucault, this pervasive web of power “reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their action and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (Foucault in Gore, 1998, p. 233). Although it is not language alone that has relegated approximately 10 percent of the world’s population to various forms of poverty and social marginalization, linguistic practice remains a readily perceptible indication of the multifarious web of power that continues to bind disability to social exclusion. A Foucauldian conception of this submerged network of social phenomena allows us to unite previously monothetic and often materially based analysis of complex social processes, thus offering varied ways of understanding the domination experienced by people with disabilities. In this way of thinking, “all social phenomena, including disability and impairment, should be understood to be woven through, and out of, cultural ideas and discursive practices” (Thomas, 2002, p. 49).

My assertion is that at the basis of this culturally constituted process of knowing, utilized so fundamentally in the form of shared reified knowledge (one might think of it

⁸ Discourse, according to Foucault(1971), does not refer simply to the interface between language and a perceived reality, it has in addition to these functional roles a very tangible shaping and ordering effect upon the world.(p. 49)

in terms of common sense or what are often depicted as essential truths) are much stronger, more deliberate relationships of power. These underlying currents of power generate and maintain a widespread cultural sense of *self* and *other* that works to constitute, shape and define oppressive social effects in a way that makes these effects appear natural or normal—a unified, unitary truth as opposed to a range of interpretable circumstances selected and enacted for various traceable reasons. This impulse is such that while we are generally not inclined to pursue any deep awareness of it, in that we are subject to its workings yet generally unaware of its presence, traces of it can be found inscribed throughout the social body its effects observable and widespread. To this point I have attempted to describe a particularly pervasive and injurious conception of the role of knowledge in the late capitalist social order, one in which discourse underwrites any sense of a shared social reality—processes replaced by facts, relations subsumed by objectifications, and socially articulated power working as the great unseen motivator. If any meaningful change is to be affected, given the circumstances I have just described, a much deeper socially critical approach will be needed. This belief is echoed in the following passage wherein Wilson and Lewiecki-Wilson (2001) state that, “transforming disability will require transforming economic, social, ethical, and educational practices, reimagining social spaces, and rethinking ordinary habits” (p.18). In the chapter that follows, I look at the practice of inclusion as it is mandated in recent policy documents currently being implemented within the Canadian system of education. I argue that, as a result of the widespread reification of disability, demonstrated in such administrative documents and in the school system itself, that little inclusion can occur except in the most cosmetic and insignificant sense.

Chapter 4. Inclusion: The Paradox at the Crossroads

The previous chapter was dedicated to the discussion of a particular way in which disability has come to be known throughout society. It was posited that disabled people and disability as a socially shared concept is managed and governed through the widespread reification of its lived complexity, transforming it in the collective mind into little more than a homogeneous sense of acute abnormality. Someone who has a whole range of other characteristics that might be considered notable or valuable, but has lost their sight, immediately becomes ‘a blind person’ in the collective gaze. A child born with foetal alcohol syndrome regardless of his or her potentiality becomes simply ‘a foetal alcohol baby,’ and so on. Tanya Titchkosky (2003) tells us that “disability is made to materialize as very little beyond anomaly, abnormalcy, lack, loss, and differential functioning. This textual representation of the aim to include disabled people conflates disability with a departure from normalcy by insisting that embodied differences matter only as problems” (p.4). This chapter sets out to examine the consequences that such discursive processes might have on current initiatives for inclusion within the Canadian education system. It attempts to address the intersection of a fundamental myth of disability (its widespread reification into a homogeneous abnormality) with an equally pervasive myth of current educational discourse (the belief that it is possible to facilitate inclusion given such widespread discourses of disablement). It is posited here that both myths extend from and are maintained by the same deep spring of discursive power, the same reified social knowledges working to maintain and police the bounds of possibility

for disabled people and enforce a widespread regime of normalcy throughout western society.

In western industrialized nations there exists an oft considered, yet never adequately demystified, myth propagated within and around the institutions set up to meet the need for mass education. I am referring to the widely held and highly pervasive notion that education is, individually and culturally speaking, a beneficial process—that education is in fact ‘good for people’. While one must concede that education is indeed beneficial for some people, and is certainly better for some people than for others, to say that it is good for people in a more widespread sense might be to disregard certain of the fundamental structures upon which it is based. It is indeed debatable as to whether it is good for those people who fall outside the social norms upon which the system of education is predicated, although the responsibility for this is usually attributed to the individual and is rarely centred on the education system itself. The education system and society in general, has often been conceived of as a meritocratic endeavour; that is: a fair and equal means to better one’s position within society through personal strength, self-sufficiency and determination. In fact, this ethos can be seen to have become ‘second nature,’ inscribed in the collective discourse of western culture. It has gone so far as to have “hardened into a form of social amnesia, a mode of consciousness that ‘forgets its own development’” (Giroux, 1983, 34). In this way of thinking it is assumed that given sufficient effort individuals should be able to improve their circumstances regardless of character, identity, or context. Unfortunately, this neglects to account for the different degree to which various groups of people are enabled and various identities legitimized by effects of power at play within our society. While the validity of meritocratic beliefs

is disputable to say the least, the unerring sense of comfort with which they are popularly embraced is distressing as it is at the core of a set of pervasive inequities paradoxically maintained by official discourses centred on ‘improving’ the lives of people. Distinct pedagogical practices meant to support people with disabilities such as the use of special classrooms, special teachers, special transportation and the creation of special curricula where there are no such provisions made within the mainstream population, ghettoize people with disabilities—this is no great revelation. It is the matter of the disabled student simply set adrift amidst all of the unaltered groupings, gradings, cognitive imperatives, spatial imperatives, and behavioural imperatives that routinely occur in schools, combined with the much subtler matter of that estranged person’s difference being construed as in need of adjustment in order to be included in that classroom that interests me. I would like to cast light upon the central paradox of present modes of inclusion: that rather than improving the lives of people by alleviating the elements of the educational institution that facilitate the state of extreme difference that is disablement, competitiveness, cognitive norms, behavioural norms to name just a few, such initiatives set out to improve what are seen as deficient individuals so that they fit the educational and social institution.

Inclusion: A Flawed Discussion

Inclusion is an issue that has been referred to often in the debate over what is or is not thought to be adequate educational provision for students considered disabled.

Corbett and Slee (2000) write that “it would appear that the development of education systems has been predicated by the denial of the existence and value of difference.

School cultures have been mono-dimensional in their establishment of the strictures of

the traditional academic male Anglophile curriculum, pedagogy and school organisation” (p.134). Inclusion, like disability, is a multifaceted concept possessing various dimensions, slants and possible interpretations. Central to any meaningful practice of inclusion must be an understanding and an appreciation of the character of difference. Human difference is a fact of all human existence. It is not an anomalous or aberrant state to be banished, hidden, or fixed. If one’s policy of inclusion can be seen to construe disability in terms of a problem or deficit faced by disabled people, to be fixed or remediated through various strategies implemented within the education system, to what degree is inclusion occurring? Disabled people are pervasively and uniformly characterized in this way and by virtue of such a fundamental flaw in the structure of education systems, and the discourses of disablement from whence it springs, the disempowerment, misrepresentation and oppression experienced in the school system continues to abound even within well intended initiatives. Although the practice of blatantly excluding students with disabilities from schools has become frowned upon, it is highly contestable as to whether or not, as the Special Committee on the Disabled states in its 1981 report, “every disabled student who has special educational needs has access to a public education system that offers equal educational opportunities in the least restrictive setting possible.”(7)

There has been marked official debate over this topic in Canada since as far back as 1981, the year designated international year of disabled persons. At this point the Canadian government’s Special Committee on the Disabled and the Handicapped considered the problem of education and its availability to individuals with disabilities, and “as a part of the policy process, provincial governments prohibited the exclusion of

children from school on the basis of their disabilities” (Canada, 1981, p.140). In addition to this rather lofty yet fairly nebulous decree, “additional money was also allotted to school boards for special education and educational programs for teachers were modified or added to so that they would be able to meet their new responsibilities to teach *all* children” (p.140). Although this document and others that have followed are rife with the optimism of well-meaning policy makers, intent on rectifying complex social issues by legislative means, it is indicative of the narrow conception of disability with which so called ‘helping’ institutions all too commonly suffer. In the policy document entitled, *Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities* then Prime Minister Jean Chretien claimed that the government is “dedicated to the simple proposition that persons with disabilities have the right to enjoy and have access to any opportunity that life has to offer” (Canada, 2002, p.2). Later in the same document it is stated that:

The Government of Canada is committed to improving the quality of life for persons with disabilities through its own programs and services, and to working with all partners to make a real difference in the opportunities for people with disabilities to participate fully in society (p.3).

It is further stated that the Government intends to achieve what it refers to as its “vision of full inclusion” (p.3) through a commitment to what it presents as “the fundamental values of Canadians—equality, respect for diversity, fairness, individual dignity and responsibility, and mutual aid and our responsibilities to one another” (p.3). I believe it is necessary to evaluate the validity of these claims and affect a discussion of the ways in which such policy is, by virtue of its orientation to the problem, to a great extent untenable. In its inability to grasp the true scope of the educational institution and of disability itself, it ultimately fails to deliver on tacit guarantees of inclusion, and on implicit guarantees of a more democratic, egalitarian society.

Helping Institutions?

Despite widespread ascription to, and facilitation of, disabling knowledge by educational policy makers, and the sway that it holds on the general public in the form of myths, confusions, fear, oversimplification, pervasive misbeliefs and other reifications, the damaging potential of such knowledges is even more disabling/ debilitating when it is disseminated and proliferated in programmatic forms as it is throughout the education system. Educational practice is not an exclusively technical endeavour just as disability is not exclusively medical in nature. I would argue that pervasively held, reified ways of knowing disability based predominantly in medical model and individual deficit modes of thought have actually furthered the exclusion and restriction of disabled students within modern advanced capitalist society, and that this oppression has been facilitated by the education system rather than ameliorated by it. Although many think of institutions such as this one as beneficent, particularly when it comes to initiatives such as inclusion whose expressed governmental mandate is “for citizens with disabilities to have the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from Canada’s prosperity—as learners, workers, volunteers and family members” (Canada, 2004, Internet), this may not in fact be entirely the case. The concentration of forces of disablement, unchecked and unabated, upon a single site of their articulation (that of the education system) has severely limited the extent to which persons with such disabilities are able to negotiate the terms of their existence within the larger social context. Furthermore, it has worked to reproduce and maintain discourses of disablement by proliferating them throughout the school-going populace, often under the auspices of ‘helping’ endeavours such as

inclusion. The consequence of such hidden processes is the exponential solidification of a conceptual circle that has been drawn around disability.

Many scholars have made persuasive arguments centred on the belief that schools are institutions that produce, legitimate, and perpetuate very specific cultural forms of meaning that they de-emphasize and discredit difference among individuals; and that they reify norms of truth, objectivity and identity. It has also been widely asserted by so called radical theorists of education that the discursive practices and epistemological framework upon which the education system rests operates in such a way as to preclude any significant initiative towards socially just or inclusive education. In fact, these theorists argue that such practices work to disprivelege and delimit all ways of knowing that do not occur within a very narrow conceptual terrain. It is through such a manipulation of discourse, a management of the very production and dissemination of specific kinds of knowledge, that variant identities are governed and dominance maintained.

In an essay entitled *The Abnormals* (1994), Michel Foucault speaks of the cultural discourse surrounding what he terms: “the great indefinite and confused family of abnormals,” our cultural knowledge of this group having been “formed in correlation with a whole set of institutions of control, a whole series of mechanisms of supervision and distribution . . . [giving] rise to ridiculous theoretical constructions but with harshly real effects” (Foucault in Rabinow, 1994, p. 51). Although attempts have been made by reform-minded policy makers to address the effects of which Foucault speaks, their gaze and that of the public at large is often diverted from the theoretical constructions, from the mechanisms of supervision and distribution, and from the institutions of control.

Instead it is voyeuristically captivated upon remedying the unfamiliar, the abnormal, and grotesque sense of difference posed by disability—of erasing its effects rather than those circumstances which have come together to create it. In order to adequately address these problems, to address more than their most visible manifestations, it is necessary to explore the cultural constructions (systems of knowledge, discursive structures, social spaces, beliefs, practices, power effects) that have accumulated within and around western systems of knowledge. It is necessary to trace the range of ways in which these systems of thought, these ways of knowing, acting and interacting, continue to be facilitated through the education system in spite of longstanding attempts at educational reform. Why is it that, as Jennifer M. Gore (1998) wonders:

Despite the diversity of educational ideas and enormous intellectual labour invested in educational change, the experience of schooling, probably for most readers of this text, bears some remarkable similarities. For instance . . . the ‘tightening’ of bodies that accompanies schooling . . . manifest in generations of former and current students who ask permission to leave rooms, who tense up in examination situations, who beam with the tiniest expression of approval (p.231).

Similar observations can be extended both to the unchecked response to the spectacle that we have constructed around impairment, our fear, revulsion, pity, curiosity, and even our compassion belies a deeper impulse. Why is it that despite a relatively long history of special education, integration, inclusion and other such endeavours we still quite uniformly conceive of disability as a problem or deficit to be fixed, as a tragedy, or more simply as difference embodied? This is not a problem that is likely to be remedied with a simple cause and effect approach. It is woven deeply within us and within the culture with which we have surrounded ourselves. It produces an increasingly familiar, even commonplace, motion whereby the very logic of inclusion solidifies and hems itself

off from that which it would close on and ultimately diminish. Tanya Titchkosky (2003)

sheds light on such responses writing that:

One of the dangers of focusing exclusively on exclusion without taking into account the inclusionary practices that generate exclusion, is that we might be tempted to ignore the constitutive powers of seemingly benign remedial programs that claim to solve the problem of marginalised people. Remedial programs are never simply a response to an already existing problem. To know how disability is produced as a problem in need of remedy, to know how for example, disability is given shape as an excluded population in need of programs enabling inclusion, is to come to know how and why disability matters (p.2)

Stated as what might initially sound like a riddle, but is to my way of thinking the paradox of inclusion itself: in order to remediate what we have over time constituted as a problem, we in western society who have an interest in a socially just education, must reconstitute our knowledge of disability and come to understand it as other than a problem. In order to erase the reifications through which we currently position disabled people as other within the education system of which we would 'include' them. This will involve the constitution of an educational endeavour in terms other than 'us' and 'them.' We must begin to treat each and every student as in need of inclusion regardless of the character of their abilities. We must stop measuring and dividing them according to the valuation of these abilities and begin to develop a valuation of the complexity of their person. While our current theories of educational practice may in fact yield certain benefits in terms of educational organization, measurement, and the maintenance of a certain standard of ability, they will never yield an inclusive education system. What has occurred through the enfranchisement and reinforcement of reified ways of knowing is that while they often meet a certain need for ease of instruction and accountability, effects that aren't as readily identifiable, such as those discussed here, too often remain unexamined. Programs that approach disability as a tragedy, deficit, or problem, as

programs of inclusion do, facilitate the consistent and pervasive enactment of the very divisions and exclusions that they would address. In other words, “each and every programmatic attempt to institute inclusion is, at one and the same time, making disability materialize in particular ways” (Titchkosky, 2003, p.2), rather than helping to make it disappear as it would claim to. It is in the hopes of drawing attention to the conditions of these obscured power relations and to the sites of their articulation that this inquiry is made, connected as it is to the particular formulation of discursive power, stemming from poststructuralist social analysis. In accordance with such social models of disability and critical theories of education, it is my belief that no earnest attempt to facilitate inclusive education, or to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities into society as a whole, can occur without first addressing and transforming the discursive structures responsible for the widespread reification of disability within the collective mind.

If disability continues to be constituted in terms of a problem, deficit or abnormal state of difference it can only be ‘included’ as such, and disabled people will remain disabled, excluded, unknown and oppressed. Jenny Corbett and Roger Slee (2000) communicate the profound lack of compromise with which this struggle must be carried out writing that “inclusive education is not another bureaucratic discourse for surveilling and managing disabled or the so-called ‘special educational needs students’” (p.134), and adding that, “difference is not a euphemism for defect, for abnormality, for a problem to be worked out through technical assimilationist education policies. Diversity is a social fact” (p.134). I would add that it is a complex and often obscured social fact which in order to be understood and practiced in the form of inclusion necessitates a change in the

way that inclusion is conceived of and implemented throughout western systems of education.

Chapter 5. Questioning the Myth of Inclusive Education

Power arrangements may often be arbitrary, as Foucault argues; and structures, fictitious, as Derrida contends; but their stories are important in the organization and operation of our social world. It seems important, then, that we should read closely what we find around us as well as what is generally considered to be our canonical knowledge . . . (Cherryholmes, 1988, p.154).

The very concept of normalcy by which most people . . . shape their existence is in fact tied inexorably to the concept of disability, or rather, the concept of disability is a function of a concept of normalcy. Normalcy and disability are part of the same system (Davis, 1995, p.2).

The initial aim of this paper has been to expand and particularize the way power is thought to operate with respect to disability within and throughout western post-industrialized society and the western education system. My final aim is to draw upon this notion of power in positing a re-orientation of orthodox educational approaches to inclusion. Approaches that are all too often characterized as ones “in which the voices of the professions dominate . . . speak[ing] for people with disabilities and . . . ‘know[ing]’ them—rendering them the objects of professional work” (Corbett & Slee, 2000, p. 135). The now familiar technical practices of diagnosis, categorization, grouping and the subsequent remediations and modifications that these divisions perpetuate will create neither the educational nor the social inclusion that is desired; the problem is not where to put students with disabilities, or how to decide where to put them, or how to make *them* more like some fictionalized *us*; the problem is not even particularly how to consciously treat *them* differently—it is how to think of them differently, or oddly enough, how not to think of them differently. It is through the provocation of a new awareness of the socio-cultural nexus from which social constructs precluding inclusion in its deepest sense

stem—it is through the invocation and maintenance of new ways of knowing difference. Schools must cease to be homogenizing institutions whose practice attempts to instill greater similitude in the population, and become particularizing institutions whose practice attempts to instill a greater desire for new and infinitely varied understandings of our lived reality, of difference and sameness and of the systems of thought from which they spring. This education must be more efficacious in accounting for a power embedded, not just in the various competing ideologies (conservatism, liberalism, multiculturalism, humanisms, etc.), a power that cannot be combated simply by *doing* things differently, it must recognize a power that is wound throughout all social practice, requiring that we *know* things differently. We must instill within ourselves the desire for a knowledge of the world and a self-knowledge that is complex rather than simple; we must propagate a knowledge wrought with consideration and curiosity rather than with reification, wherever we find this to be possible.

In essence what is to be striven for is a constant revision of our inherited ways of knowing—those shared ways of understanding the world and its relation to us that are at the very basis of what we have come to consider rational thought. For we in western society think and speak a public language, a process drawn from our past yet altered and remade according to the dictates of the present. It is a shared, reified way of knowing, a deeply felt discursive current based in construed wholes and false binaries, and while this process may not be wholly avoidable we must begin to examine it, to nurture a suspicion of it and other such processes. We must do so in order to provoke new suspicions, newly asked questions, and newfound ways of knowing through which we might begin to

ameliorate the abuses and exclusions that so often accompany our current regimes of truth.

Lennard Davis (2002) comes to some very similar conclusions in a chapter entitled, *The Rule of Normalcy* in which he describes the rise of various standardizations and codifications of social practice that began to take hold at the time of the Enlightenment, and have continued to exert themselves in the minds and bodies of the populace up until the present day. Davis makes what I believe are valuable connections between socially constructed linguistic and conceptual norms, newly emerging bodily norms and the widespread normalization of nonstandard behaviour in general. He writes that “prescriptive grammar arose in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in an attempt to regularize the English language, which had no grammar, to the level of the revered Latin or Greek . . .” (104). He continues on this trajectory stating that over time spelling, meaning, and both the spoken and written acts were fit to somewhat arbitrary categories. Similarly, around the middle to late eighteenth century we come to experience the advent of the concept of normalcy and its application to the social body. For as Davis points out “the word ‘normal’ only appeared in English about a hundred and fifty years ago, and in French fifty years earlier” (p.105). We also begin to see, with the development of statistics, the emergence of the bell or ‘normal’ curve and thus the idea of the ‘norm’ and its antithesis the ‘abnormal’ beginning to weigh more heavily upon the public—employed upon bodies, minds, and actions. As there became a common conception of that which was normal, gradually people sought to embody it, drawing further from that which was newly considered abnormal. Echoing the question that Davis

poses his reader with, I wonder at this point whether it is purely coincidental that normalcy and linguistic standardization come about within a very similar time frame.

Questions concerning the character and nature of post-enlightenment society have been much considered in recent scholarly discourse, and heated debate over the relative virtue or vice of certain distinctive modes of thought that began to emerge in this period has equally often been in evidence. The pursuits of those in the field of education who concern ourselves with fashioning the school system into a means of ‘enlightening’ and enabling the public, in considering ways that they may know themselves and the society in which they live, in searching out ways that they may arrange and re-arrange the social discourse practices that control and maintain their lives, and in re-negotiating the meanings which have been ascribed to their lives in ways that enable and empower one another rather than the adverse, stem to a great extent from such questions. In a recent issue of Harper’s magazine Terry Eagleton (2005) provided the readership with an interesting description of a fundamental yet frequently misconstrued condition of modern society. I will relate some of it here as I feel it has great resonance with the issues that I am attempting to deal with here.

Eagleton (2005) begins with a description of two societies. The first is a society that cherishes individual freedom and self determination as represented in a political form known as democracy. In it all members are seen as fundamentally equal and the variance between their individual cultures and lifestyles is “zealously fostered” (p.91). Differences are to be mediated with recourse to reason and negotiation as opposed to being governed primarily by custom, prejudice, authority or tradition. “Nothing is to be taken for granted simply because it is centuries old or announced by an archbishop”

(p.91). Rather than relying simply upon trust a reasoned suspicion and a desire to understand things for oneself is fostered. Instead of submitting to the dictates of custom and authority “we are to have the courage to think for ourselves,” (p.91) a process requiring that we grasp the truth of the world from a removed and objective position that is free of prejudice. In this way of living “the truth is not an end in itself: the point, rather, is to harness it to the use and fulfillment of humankind . . . it is a practical, experimental affair not a dogmatic absolute” (p.91). If humans are able to resist the outright authority of kings and clergymen, “cast off irrational prejudices, and press knowledge into the service of emancipation . . . history is likely to be a narrative of steady progress” (p.91).

The second type of society is one in which the inhabitants are solitary, fearful and zealously guard themselves within their own private spheres. The only thing that they are able to know with certainty is that which they are experiencing in a particular moment. It is impossible to have an awareness of other people even enough to know that they have similar mental processes. Eagleton (2005) states that “communication is sickeningly precarious, and friendship, community, and solidarity are less genuine bonds than an interlocking of private interests. In fact, it is self interest that drives this social order” (p.91). Reason in this social order is ‘withered and anemic’ and has little connection to social life—no longer providing a basis or foundation for that society. It is no more than a mechanistic way of choosing “which means will most effectively secure [ones] self-interested end . . . and becomes a blunt instrument for promoting ones own gratification” (p.91). Cloven from those things that give it any significance (feelings, intuition, the senses) reason becomes employed in a new tyrannical execution of power different from

that of the monarchies and clergies of old yet equally restrictive and encompassing a much wider spectrum of governance. “All those dimensions of existence—art, feeling, humor, imagination, sensuous fulfillment, doing things just for the hell of it—which have a value but no price” (p.92) are expunged. This society is one that has been infected with a pervasive form of what is referred to by Eagleton as a ‘bleak utility’.

While the former of these societies would quite clearly seem to be a desirable alternative to the latter, and might in fact have characteristics that lay fairly close to those that many educators have in mind when calling for reforms to the education system, Eagleton would have us consider them one and the same—two sides of the same socio-historical coin as it were. He writes that “both are images of the Enlightenment, that enthusiasm for reason, progress, freedom, science and secularism . . . of which modern capitalist societies are the inheritors” (p.92) and goes on to inform us that “the even worse news is that you cannot easily pick and choose between the two, passing over the less appetizing features for the more alluring ones, because they are bound intricately together” (p.92). If this were in fact the case it would certainly problematize attempts at social and educational reform that were prone to an engagement in conceptually and theoretically reductive responses to complex, multifaceted issues, issues such as medical or individual deficit construals of disability and assimilationist or integrationist attempts at facilitating inclusion. The question that must be asked in light of such a revelation is how might such knowledge inform our pursuit of educational reforms aiming to contest exclusion and propagate a deeper sense of equity and social justice in schools? What can we in the field of education do to redress seemingly rational modes of thought that would

not only appear to be prohibitive of inclusion and educational equality but can be seen to produce a range of other oppressive effects as well?

How might we enact this widespread cultural interrogation of the rules by which our constitutive social processes are understood? How do we alter deeply held bodies of knowledge in order to change the oppressive effects that they engender? It is my belief that the answers lie in the very location at which we began. That they lie in the education system and the immense potential held within it for shaping pervasive bodies of shared social knowledge. Being that the socio-political climate that we exist in is one where orthodox interests carry much more weight than so called radical interests; there is an inordinately small window for such transformative education to occur. As has been discussed prior to this, education, no matter how emancipatory its aims may be, does not on its own lead to social transformation. One need only look at past as well as current attempts to *fix the problem of disability* in order to get a sense that the terms of the situation we are faced with have been misconstrued (or at least construed in a particular manner for very particular reasons). It has been argued that even the most well intentioned endeavours can be disabling rather than enabling, can be oppressive rather than liberatory. In this conception of socio-cultural power those of us who are members of the western capitalist social order are all responsible for allowing and for participating, to varying extents and to various degrees of complicity, in the inequalities, deficits of power, and acts of oppression that occur therein. We dwell in various degrees of ignorance of, and capitulation with these forces, in order that we may not have to confront the terms of our own inclusion at the expense of the systematized exclusion of others. Is it possible, through suspicion and critique, through theorisation, and through

creation, to come to an awareness of these social processes and to reduce the amount to which we participate in them and the amount which we are manoeuvred by them? Is it possible to reorient society even slightly, through a reorientation of the education system?

In order to do so it is necessary that we develop an approach whereby the populace might themselves be prompted to critically evaluate the knowledge claims and discursive structures supporting both dominant and radical ideologies. Socially derived inequalities, differences and exclusions must be reduced if there is to be a reduction of oppression. It is of the utmost importance that we recognize “social oppression [as] an important characteristic and outcome of contemporary educational systems, even though it is often unintended as either characteristic or outcome” (Cherryholmes, 1988, p.164).

Although, as Eagleton (2005) suggests, we are not likely to easily or rapidly alter the staggering amalgamation of forces upon which our social order rests, it is my belief that their slow erosion may be initiated. As Cladis (1999) states, “by examining the socio-historical structures of knowledge and power, of practices and institutions, we can gain critical leverage on them and the possibility of promising change. This is never a matter of escaping our social webs, but of making them more transparent” (p.12). While I have argued up until this point that it is of utmost importance to equip learners with all of the critical knowledge essential in the recognition and reduction of these social webs, such change tends to occur slowly and is often marked by as much regression as it is progress. Some have even argued that without the voluntary relinquishment and active refusal of even subtle forms of privilege and power by those who benefit from it the conditions reproducing widespread oppression and exclusion are very likely to continue (Cherryholmes, 1988). Despite what often appear to be overwhelmingly imbalanced

odds, it is important to consider what a critical education of this sort might look like should it gain the necessary centrality as a requisite component of any educational endeavour that would lay claim to inclusion.

As I have mentioned in previous chapters it has been, and continues to be, commonplace to characterize disability as some arrangement of those functional limitations which are attributed to disease, chronic illness or injury (Barnes, Mercer & Shakespeare, 1999), as an inability or restriction from doing things as ‘normal’ people do them (Titchkosky, 2003), or more generally, as a deficit or problem to be overcome or eradicated through institutions and discourses such as those of social welfare, the medical profession and the education system (Wendell, 1996; Drake, 1996). Moreover, such seemingly beneficent institutions have been identified as operating alongside discursive forces that work to configure the perception of disability and disabled people, in ways that paradoxically lead to their pervasive exclusion from, and de-legitimization within, the society in which they live. This disablement occurs as a function of a society that understands disability and disabled people simply as acutely different, reifying the full range of human complexity where impairment is present. In such a society disability and disablement are “an outcome of political and social decisions rather than medical limitations” (Davis, 1995, p.10), a state of being where “people have constructed the world physically and cognitively to reward those with like abilities and handicap those with unlike abilities” (Davis, 1995, p.10). Inequalities such as these are in evidence throughout our social, personal and built environments and there is little reason to believe that they will disappear of their own accord.

While as Cleo Cherryholmes (1988) would remind us “Foucault was not the first to emphasize the importance of history and power in social theory, nor was Derrida the first to ask if the meaning of words is fixed . . . their exploration of these and other arguments, along with the force of their scholarship, has produced insights that previously, perhaps, had only been glimpsed at” (p.151). Since I have argued, in accordance with these thinkers, that what would often appear to us to be an autonomous and equal social order is in fact characterized by a great many seemingly fundamental fictions, it would seem to be necessary that we in the field of education present various means to interpret and reconstruct our ways of knowing and being in the world.

Cherryholmes (1988) writes that:

Our choices and actions, in their totality, are pragmatic responses, to the situations in which we and those around us find ourselves. They are based upon visions of what is beautiful good, and true instead of fixed, structured, moral, or objective certainties. Poststructural analyses contribute criticism, which is sometimes radical, to our pragmatic choices (p.151).

These statements, and those of numerous educators and social theorists, represent attempts to examine the machinations of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1980) in various social contexts with the hopes of negotiating its effects on individuals in more egalitarian ways. While it is certainly possible to forget this amidst our earnest struggle for a more just and egalitarian education system, as has been stated repeatedly, the practice of education itself is a sophisticated socializing force. It is, alongside the medical profession, perhaps one of the most influential institutional structures for the inculcation of widespread discourses of disablement that exists within western society. This places socially minded educators and the practice of transformative education itself in a tenuous yet also a potentially powerful position for promoting positive change.

Nancy Fraser (1989) comments further on this situation stating that, “power touches people’s lives more fundamentally through their social practices than through their beliefs. This, in turn, suffices to rule out political orientations aimed primarily at the demystification of ideologically distorted belief systems” (p.18) for these tend to be unnecessarily monolithic in their own right. It is not adequate to speak of the problem using the standard assumptions about the role of power, or the constitution of powerlessness in society, for these often bear the stamp of dominant modes of thought and as such are insufficient in their understanding of the western social order and its obscured modes of governance. These reductive social models diminish the fine detail of the situation, further obscuring the underlying circumstances of that which they purport to serve. If we are to achieve an integration of these challenging and often contested epistemological positions into the wider social and political spheres, we must all become aware of the deeply held bodies of knowledge existant therein in order to avoid perpetuating (insofar as it is possible) the oppressive effects that they engender?

Being that the socio-political climate in which we exist is one where orthodox interests carry much more weight than so called radical interests there is an inordinately small window for critical education to occur. In light of this situation it is necessary that we develop an approach whereby the populace might themselves be prompted to critically evaluate the knowledge claims and discursive structures supporting *both* dominant and radical ideologies. In order to do this we must “reassert the importance of comprehending schooling as a mechanism of politics embedded in the relations of power, negotiation and contestation” (Giroux, 1996, p.43) and transform the education system from an institution maintaining disabling practices, such as standardization, competition

and ability grouping, to one which mobilizes a much wider portion of society in reducing them. In order to do so we must initiate a general state of what Cherryholmes (1988) describes as 'critical pragmatism'. "Critical pragmatism results when a sense of crisis is brought to our choices, when it is accepted that our standards, beliefs, values, guiding texts, and discourses-practices themselves require evaluation and reappraisal" (p.151). He carries on to say that poststructural analysis and criticism will yield a practice that is "as critical, unbounded, radical, visionary, and utopian *or* as vulgar, bounded, conservative, conventional, and traditional as we choose" (p.151). When as a part of a social institution that claims to promote inclusion and equity, we choose to pursue "efficiency in the absence of criticism, when actions are privileged over thought, when practice is valued and theory is disparaged (as if that were possible) for the sake of making things work 'better'" (p.151), we overbalance that vulgar side of western post-enlightenment thought that Eagleton points to earlier in the chapter. Furthermore, these values and ways of thinking, while failing to be eradicable, have little place in the education system—a social location in which we should strive as hard as possible to maintain tolerance, encourage inquiry, criticism, debate, dissent and above all value difference, if there ever was one. The vulgar, brutalizing side of our post-enlightenment lineage, that side of society which "pursues efficiency without criticism often promotes the advantage of those who are already advantaged while rhetorically claiming to aid those who are disadvantaged" (p.151). While we may have to grudgingly tolerate such potentially callous sides of ourselves in car dealerships and flea markets, it is a side of us that we must struggle to keep out of our schools should we want to avoid their coming to

resemble these places. For it is important to remember that there remains a distinction, if only in theory, between *what should be* and *what actually is*.

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