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Anita Ghai

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EDITORIAL

This journal is a fruit of much labour *and* pain over the last decade – how the idea unfolded and blossomed, can be gleaned from the *Introduction*. We have a long *Introduction*, especially in this inaugural issue in order to situate the beginning of the idea of this journal, also, we wanted all the members of the editorial team – which consists of a lucky balance of gender, age and disability – to have a voice that went into the making of that idea.

The unintentional theme of ableism *in general* emerging in this inaugural issue is a happy coincidence – particular forms or versions of ableism may very well be argued for but many of the articles pay homage to a generalised notion of ableism that too needs to be theorised. When we started, we did not have the idea that ableism will feature so prominently in this inaugural issue.

The three main articles are all invited papers, this being the inaugural issue; coincidentally, all the three authors are also the first three invited experts to the reading group *CDSI* (Critical Disability Studies in India), which is the force behind the final birth of the journal.

And what year it has chosen to be born, when all around we see sharpening of antagonisms between different interest that bring disability issues into even sharper focus. When all around in the world and around us we see death and mourning, we also realise that there is now a greater need to find a voice of our own – a voice that distinctly recognises disability as a central concern.

This has also been the spirit of many (now, too many) webinars responding to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis; this issue picks two of them and partially analyses them within the context of the pandemic – this provides the main *masala* for the two pieces in the Provocations section.

The Commentary section will carry a critical analysis of a paper or manuscript arising out of intensive discussion on that paper in an actual *CDSI* group meeting – it is seen as a mini-workshop for a paper in making – hopefully, such a format will provide pointers that are found useful by the original author(s); this exercise also creates a conversation around disability focussed on *a* particular text that is sometimes missing in the emerging 'culture' of critical disability studies (CDS) in south Asia. In this issue we carry a critique of a paper looking at the connections between Gandhi's many ideas and disability.

Departing from traditional book reviews, this journal encourages – and will do so more through its future issues – reviews of all sorts of events that can be examined with a CDS lens. However, as far as traditional book reviews are concerned, in this issue we highlight the two recent excellent, much needed, books on disability studies within the south Asian, mainly Indian, context.

Since we believe that both the universal and the particular are essential, our initial platter will hopefully give an idea of the many flavours that we plan to bring to the *thaali*.

Tanmoy Bhattacharya & Anita Ghar

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INTRODUCTION

§ 1.0

Tanmoy Bhattacharya

I have been thinking and talking about ideology quite a bit in the last quarter of this terrible year (2020).[1] When I sat down to trace the origin of this idea in my own thinking around disability, I am taken back to May 2012, when a little, yet significant – as will become clear shortly – event took place. Just a month prior to this, I as the coordinator of the University of Delhi's Equal Opportunity Cell (EOC), along with almost all other members of the Cell (including Anita Ghai), were unceremoniously replaced by a new team with a change in guard at the university – a familiar trope in the administrative workings of organisations and nations all around the world. This was the first EOC at any university in India, established as early as 2006 with Rama Kant Agnihotri of Linguistics as its first Coordinator, who was kind enough to co-opt many of us as members soon after. By the time I took over in 2009, we had collectively made great strides in all spheres of disability and education, so much so, that soon, we became a model for setting up of EOCs at other universities in the country. My own focus at the EOC was always on creating bodies of knowledge; keeping that in mind and realising the even greater need for organising around knowledge structures found expression in forming a loose collective in May, 2012, called SIG-DSU, Special Interest group on Disability Studies at the Universities, literally in my own departmental office at the department of linguistics where six of us re-read Paul Hunt's celebrated essay "A Critical Condition"[2], which I had got informally translated into Hindi a couple of years ago when I was teaching it in the Disability and Human Rights course at the EOC. In the Preamble of the group, I wrote this:

> Disability related activities in India, with its overemphasis on services, is alarmingly close to creating a hegemonic discourse that shrinks the space for the emergence of a Disability Studies discourse, even further.[3]

This sentiment soon found echoes in a significant opening talk of a conference on subjectivity that Anita had organised at Ambedkar University in August 2013. There, I presented a paper titled "Disability Studies as Resistance: The Politics of Estrangement". That talk was formally published in a book titled *Disability in South Asia* edited by Anita, where I continued to take a purported controversial position thus:

> In fact, what feeds each other within the Indian context is not DS and activism but activism and service, the former accentuating the latter. This association is

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[1] I gave a reading of the Gramscian version of ideology in a short presentation titled "The Terrain of Disability Studies and Critical Abeyance", at an event organised by Anita Ghai and the Ambedkar University, Delhi on October 28, 2020; I discuss this further below (see also Note 9).

[2] Hunt, Paul. 1966. A Critical Condition. In Hunt, Paul (ed.), *Stigma: The Experience of Disability*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, p. 145-59.

[3] See the website for SIG-DSU at: https://ijcds.wordpress.com for the full text of the Preamble.

> threatening to develop into a nexus that will steadfastly keep DS out forever. Therefore, it is time now to move away for a while from the excitement of sloganeering and to build a tradition of true scholarship in DS that in fact feeds activism back in various new ways.[4]

Also around this time, I was developing an understanding of the philosophy of inclusion that is based neither on empathy, nor rights, and proposed in a series of talks in 2014 the idea of centring disability knowledge, which found its fullest form in a talk at a history conference in November 2014,[5] to be published early next year (2021).[6]

The reading group sessions, after the initial years of intensive discussions, were somewhat slowing down, mainly due to a constantly shifting student population changing its interest and, sometimes, careers. After nearly six months of inactivity, Yogesh and Avinash, a couple of research students from the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), approached me earnestly to revive the reading sessions as this seems to be the only avenue available where disabled research students working in Delhi on disability studies themes find a liberal environment to discuss, rant and also to relax. Revive of course we did, and read several seminal texts on disability, argued on till late into the evenings for three, four or even five hours on issues that relate to the immediate concerns of the members of the group, which is about the barriers disabled research students face everywhere in all facets of their lives.

This has been my "work", our work, keeping this collective strung together, to read texts and to understand our own predicament, our own positionings amidst the various currents that we are each truly a product of. This is what true intersectionality means to me – working out our own coordinates, and this is what research means to me, it is not something which is alienated from my own self, it *is* me.[7] Through such "works", I see the workings of a Gramscian[8] notion of ideology, especially in a new reading[9] of his idea of ideology as a "a *terrain* of practices, principles, and dogmas having a material and institutional nature constituting individual subjects once these were inserted into such a terrain." Exploring and enriching such little pockets of knowledge is what constitutes the New Intellectualism of our times, and it is sorely needed.

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[4] Bhattacharya, T. (2018). Disability Studies as resistance: The Politics of estrangement. In Anita Ghai (Ed.), *Disability in South Asia: Knowledge and experience.* New Delhi: Sage Publishing India Pvt. Ltd., pp. 75–98.

[5] "Are We All Alike? Questioning the pathologies of the 'Normate'", Paper presented at the Inequality in Education International Conference, University of Delhi, Nov. 2014.

[6] Chapter of the same title as in Note 5 in R. K. Agnihotri, V. Gupta, and M. Panda (eds.). 2021. *Modern Transformations and the Challenges of Inequalities in Education in India*, Orient BlackSwan, Delhi, pp. 431-463.

[7] I explored this in detail recently in a talk titled "Unfolding (of) theories, not programmes (programs?)" delivered at the *Fostering Research in Disability* winter school on 19 December 2020, organised by NALSAR and BITS Pilani, Hyderabad.

[8] The invocation of Gramsci in disability research is certainly not unheard of, and was discussed first (and extensively) by Michael Oliver (1990) in his book *The Politics of Disablement*, Macmillan, London, and then briefly by Bill Hughes, Dan Goodley and Lennard Davis in the concluding chapter of their jointly edited book (Goodley, Hughes and Davis, 2012) *Disability and Social Theory*, Palgrave Macmillan, London.

[9] As explored in the talk mentioned in Note 1.

My own interest was noticeably shifting from disability studies to newer flavours of critical disability studies (CDS) around this time. As a result, I brought in more and more of CDS literature to the reading group meetings. Apart from intersectionality, there were other questions that were waiting to be asked at the meetings, about our own conducts, which, in hindsight, I think, sooner or later were bound to be raised. All this while, I could also detect how the focus on interpreting texts – the hallmark of our group – was somehow slipping away.

What happened next, again in hindsight, was a miracle. The setting of that particular evening will be forever etched in my mind, as we sat at a table at an unkempt garden under the setting sun in the late winter of 2018. It was a smaller group that day, and the text I had chosen was of only a couple of pages, but a significant one; it was a blog-size article written by a very promising American philosopher, Elizabeth Barnes, titled "Arguments That Harm – and Why We Need Them," published merely ten days before our meeting that was held on 28 February 2018.[10] This reading and the ensuing discussion that evening, in retrospect, fortunately, brought to surface registers that were not heard earlier, and a classic critique emerged of the sometimes nauseating chauvinistic relating of anecdotes and the associated sexist language use by some of the male members of the group. And in a moment of absolute clarity, I realised a week later, sitting among friends in faraway but cleaner and awe-inspiring Gangtok, that if disability becomes an excuse for gender insensitivity, then most things are not right. Indeed, we had seen and heard and lived through a CDS moment ourselves. In a classic Laclau and Mouffe reading of the situation, it was clear to me that a change in the fabric of our collective social identity is called for as the two articulations (disability and gender) are not contiguous anymore, there is no possibility of forming a 'bloc' thereof.

New pledges were taken as the group reformed in a couple of weeks as CDSI (Critical Disability Studies in India); I wrote the following introductory text in our new group's website:

> It was Spring, new things were bound to happen. And they did. Looking back …, it surely was a good idea, this version of Critical Disability Studies in India (CDSI) or SIG-DSU 2.0 – we are more enriched and aware, that is a substantial gain; it was Spring after all. This newer version of our earlier group was a natural consequence of our interest re-orienting slowly but surely towards a critical analysis of disability studies. 'Question everything', that basic dictum of any critical enquiry, became our guiding light, that led not only to re-christening the group's name and changing its focus but to also a questioning of our own inner souls – our motives and our modus. The first thing that fell to incessant questioning by some of us is our level of gender awareness.[11]

Since then, we have read more, 'relaxed' less and completed more articles than ever before. And now finally, realised a long-pending dream of all of us to come up with a

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[10] See for the full text: https://www.chronicle.com/article/arguments-that-harm-and-why-we-need-them/

[11] https://sites.google.com/view/cdsi/home

journal of our own. Through this journal, we will continue to raise critical questions, and we will continue to insist on precision in interpreting texts – let such an occasion never arise when sweeping generalisations of ideas are glossed over 'sympathetically' only in the disability context, and because it is the same complex world that all of us inhabit, all of us deserve to be allowed to understand and be understood in the same complex way.

§ 2.0

Anita Ghai

All human life begins in a complete state of dependence. Human minds and bodies are always in fluidity, moving from a flawed, imperfect and vulnerable beings to a relatively self-sufficient existence. During this process of alteration, individuals undergo experiences of humiliation and defeat. But persons with disabilities are signified as being irresistibly the 'Other', their disability is symbolically considered a bundle of 'deprivation', 'calamity', 'loss', lack, 'dependency' and 'deviation'. The construction is that of – substandard human beings, powerless, and incapable of independent existence. This experience of disability exceeds fault lines of nation, gender, class, caste, race and myriad other identities.

Approximately one billion people, or 15 per cent of the world's population experiences some form of disability. One-fifth of the estimated global total, or between 110 million and 190 million people, experience significant disabilities (comprehensive information can be found at https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability). Prevalence of disability is estimated to be even higher in the developing countries. As per 2011 Census of India, 2.68 crore[12] persons are 'disabled', which is 2.21 per cent of the total population.

The present journal takes up a critical disability approach which stems from a disability theory concerned with a critique of society as a whole. It differs from traditional disability theory, which focuses only on charity, medical orientation as well as the social model approach. Critical disability theories aim to excavate the surface of social life and unearth the suppositions that keep disabled bodied human beings from evolving as a whole and true understanding of how the world works.

The so-called "western" understanding of disability undermines the significance of research in the South Asia and primarily India. It does not mean that we want to negate the knowledge construction in the west, but rather that we are more interested in creating a space where the lived realities of disabled persons can be understood from the vantage point of developing countries.

Disability, like questions of race, gender, caste and class, is one of the most provocative topics among scholars who have an interest in the marginality, both in the west and elsewhere. Over the last ten years or so it has become clear that the knowledge and meaning of disability in India has been understood as embedded in multiple cultural discourses that are subtly nuanced. The understanding of disability has challenged the epistemological ignorance of the social sciences, humanities and science. Bridging the gap

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[12] 2 68 00 000, that is, 26 million 800 thousand.

between theory and practice is significant, as it is critical to enlighten the structures of power and learn how historical and cultural perceptions of the human body have been informed by developing countries. For disability scholars from the global South, there is always an uncertainty about the merging or separation of 'us' (read 'disabled') and 'them' (read 'able'). In many instances, disability theorists have addressed political issues through the constructions of binary oppositions that not only contain prejudice and bias but also fall into the trap of naively reversing the post-colonial legacy and the problematic of oppressed vs. oppressor.

Critical disability studies in our understanding of disability is both an existential reality in which the experiences of people with disabilities are considered predominantly critical in interpreting their own place in the able-bodied society, and too to determine the socio-economic, cultural and power relations that affect disabled persons. Developing from the activism of disabled people in the last three decades, critical disability studies implicates theory, experience, and engaged practice. CDS is an eco-system created to nurture disciplines, areas of knowledge and practice and communities of scholars and practitioners who work in critical human conditions and predicaments, be it heterogeneity of disability, old age, gender, rural and urban poverty, and sexuality. The challenge is that we can negate the pathology of any kind be it physical, mental and sensory, as being in need of rectification, and instead encourage both reasonable accommodation and equality for disabled people in all areas of life. Critical disability therefore transforms the conventional notions of disabled people as products of retribution for past sin, unfortunate, doomed victims who should adjust to the able society around them. Building on Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009),[13] CDS refers to an understanding of disability and impairment in transnational, national, and local contexts as a way of disrupting monolithic discourses of disability in the global South, while at the same time opening up a platform "to think through, act, resist, relate, communicate, engage with one another against the hybridized forms of oppression and discrimination that so often do not speak singularly of disability" (Goodley, 2013, p. 641).[14] The question is: as to why we need to engage in critical disability theory in the global South and invite disability studies scholars to engage with new questions about critical disability studies as a discursive domain of knowledge production? Before we underscore the potential of critical disability studies, it is important to foreground some of the challenges that we believe have led to a development of critical Disability Studies in India.

Aligned with CDS our location is complicated because it raises perturbing yet important questions: What is our stance as academicians and activist? With what authority can we speak about critical Disability Studies? And why? Are we speaking with disabled people or about them? What language do we use to describe critical disability? Who has the power to name? How does understanding of disability studies exclude others from speaking out? The purpose of making Disability Studies an academic discipline is to create a body of

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[13] Meekosha, H., and Shuttleworth. R. (2009). What's So 'critical' about Critical Disability Studies? *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, 15.1, 47–75.

[14] Goodley, D. (2013) Dis/entangling critical disability studies. *Disability & Society*, 28:5, 631-644, DOI: 10.1080/09687599.2012.717884.

knowledge, which can provide challenges towards rethinking and reflecting upon aspects of our comprehension of disability and social marginalisation. Disability Studies exists at the uneven boundaries of the social, concurrently rebellious, and celebratory in its insistence that disability is neither tragedy nor inspiration but a satisfying and enjoyable way of "being in the world" … if only the ableist world would not get in the way! Just like the unforeseen possibilities of a new day, reflecting on the field of disability studies is also loaded with the unknown. For instance, knowledge of disability has to be engaged in the unlearning of traditional thinking's privilege, so that, not only is one marginalised constituency in a position to listen to another, but also one learns to speak in such a way that disability studies academia can rewrite the relationship between the margin and the centre.

§ 3.0

Sharmishthaa Atreja

"I'm a disabled person" may sound matter of fact, but within an Indian set-up, the disability identity is acquired and one is never too sure of what that identity holds. The word itself takes some time to be freely used within the households and more often than not, disability consciousness comes later in life. Even if one is born with an impairment, one is not born as a disabled 'person', but rather grows up to become one. This is often done through residency in special schools, where one learns to grow with a different identity or else one is made to realise the created differences of the normative out in the world. If one does not get the needed 'collective', when people and the system tell you that "you don't belong here" or "you belong to a category", that is the time when either one is forced to grow hostile towards the mainstream or subconsciously grows hostile to oneself or both. From an impaired body to a disabled person, one needs the right kind of talk to be able to acquire the identity that truly represents oneself.

Reading disability objectively was the beginning of my journey towards my own self, to understand myself as a disabled woman, as well as to understand my gender identity more vividly. Critical Disability Studies in India (CDSI) reading group was one informal reading space which made me aware of what prejudices I am holding against my own identity as a blind woman; and how important it was to have an awareness of the internal tussles along with the awareness of what the mainstream thinks of me as a disabled person, as a woman as well as a disabled woman. I realised that engaging in reading as a 'collective', can help place the resentment of the oppression faced at the hands of systemic patriarchy in the right manner. The reading meetings helped me understand the power of academia that can contribute so much to the activism. Although, before getting involved in the conversations in the CDSI meetings, I did participate in the rallies and was a part of some disability organisations, but deep down asking for accommodations and my own rights seemed normal, because as an impaired person it was felt that impairment was my own responsibility. Subconsciously, I had internalised that I was different from others and that it was okay for the rest of the world to behave differently with me even if the attitude felt undeserved. This was because I had internalised the injustice as normal and saw myself as an impaired one for whom 'accommodations' both that at the level of social set-ups as well as that of the systems was a service.

The discussions in the CDSI group gave me all the required questions that I needed to ask myself as well as others. It gave me a chance to have my own expression and language – a language of disability and a 'me' language, where I examine each word which is often used to describe my identity, which helped me express and articulate myself better. This led me to introspectively think, 'why am I here?', this "here" in my head always had a double reference of objects. 'Here' means 'disability studies' and also 'the CDSI meetings'. It is impossible for me to think about 'disability studies' separately from my own journey with the group. Of course, I had questions about disability in general as well as my disability in particular, before engaging with the readings, but I did not have the true motivation to treat 'disability' as a matter of investigation. It was only after engaging with disability academically, where the textual and personal intersected, that I could break free from the patronising organisational vocabulary while at the same time, fully situating myself as an Indian blind woman; and in doing so, bring my subjectivity as a disabled woman back from the systemically imposed identity.

The ever-persistent fact still remains that if my identity – as anything as an academician or as an artist – does not begin with my identity of being a blind woman, then my representation in CDS would be incomplete and inauthentic. If I do not account for the oppression of the internal ableism and that of the external, which has affected each aspect of my life, then who else will do it? This is the alarming noise of the 'disability consciousness' arising out of engaging with the study group and a formal foundation of such a "collective", in the form of a journal, that will turn out to be a great contribution to disability theory.

§ 4.0

Yogesh Kumar Yadav

"When there is a will, there is a way." Having joined M.Phil. at the Centre of Historical Studies (CHS), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), I decided to undertake research on the education for disabled persons in twentieth century India. But only deciding is not enough to conduct and complete the research. One requires proper understanding of the theme and sub-themes. In order to acquire that understanding, proper guidance, academic writings, primary sources are needed. Unfortunately, I was lacking in all of them due to various reasons but one chief one being inaccessibility literally everywhere. Though, we are assigned supervisors to guide us in our research, but none of the faculty members were familiar with the academic writings of disability studies and so was the case with my supervisor. Disability studies as a discipline was also at its nascent stage in India. These were some of the highly challenging circumstances present in front of a researcher who wanted to pursue research in the field of disability.

There were some more students in JNU pursuing research on disability issues and almost all of us were facing the same challenges mentioned above. In fact, few of them were compelled to change their themes from disability to other 'mainstream' humanities and social science topics. It was done as we were associated with different centres and departments of humanities and social sciences. A dedicated centre or department for disability studies does not still exist in JNU and so is the case with most of the Indian universities.

We generally discussed these challenges among ourselves. One day, in beginning of the year 2016, I got an opportunity to attend the talks delivered by Tanmoy Bhattacharya and Jagdish Chander on disability at a function organised by a disability organisation at St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi. Though, Professor Tanmoy is a linguist, he has contributed many academic articles on disability. I was already familiar with some of his work. Having attended the talks, I along with my friends discussed some of the challenges of disability research with him. We came to know that he had already initiated a disability study circle with the name of Special Interest Group on Disability Studies at the Universities (SIG-DSU) in May 2012, where academic writings from the discipline of disability studies were read, discussed and comprehended. However, he told us that the sessions are on hold since sometime due to some reasons. Our fruitful discussion resulted in the revival of this programme in February 2016.

Initially, the sole objective of the group was to undertake comprehensive reading, understanding and discussing the writings on disability studies which is still the main objective. We have read and discussed writings of many writers across the globe on various theories, themes and lived experiences of disability. With the expansion of epistemologies of disability, we also thought to contribute in the discipline. Therefore, we are extremely happy to lay the foundation of *InJCDS* and have now successfully published its first issue.

It would only be fair to acknowledge the sincere hard work, commitment and contribution of our founder and the group as a whole towards promoting disability studies among the disability researchers and scholars of India by providing them an appropriate platform. Professor Ghai is the one whose writings laid the foundation in me to start with disability studies in the first place. Apart from the mentors, I would also recall all my researcher-friends who are and have been a part of this wonderful journey so far. Without their engagement and in-depth discussions, exchange of ideas would not have been possible.

§ 5.0

Santosh Kumar

The role of the able-bodied person has been contested in Disability Studies as Simi Linton (2005)[15] raises the question "who does and who should do disability studies". It is always difficult to position oneself to the stream of identity politics if one does not belong to that identity. Linton offers the solution too, "it is strategically useful to engage nondisabled people in disability studies but find a way for them to articulate their subject position vis-a-vis the idea of disability". The recent reorientation of Critical Disability Studies (CDS) has been remarkable as the binary between abled and disabled bodies is

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[15] Linton, S. (1998). *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*. New York: NYU Press.

challenged with the knowledge and experience from the Global South. It has also been broadened by studies in ableism (Campbell, 2009)[16] and ability privileges (Wolbring, 2014).[17] This shift in thinking process has been a kind of my recent initiation into CDS. However, I have been a part of the CDSI collective right from the beginning, which has shaped my understanding of disability studies in general and helped me to sharpen my understanding in this area over the many years.

The understanding of the discourses around dis/ability help me understand the apprehensions of common people about disease and disabilities. I will share my anecdote in this connection. The local barber shops refused to give a shave to my ailing father around Rajan Babu Tuberculosis Hospital in Delhi because they assumed my father was a "TB patient" (Tuberculosis). Later on, one of the barbers confessed unapologetically that the other barbers might have understood my father who was looking pale and weak as one of the patients of the nearby TB Hospital and hence pushed us away. Tuberculosis is highly stigmatised in our society because of its infectious nature. Though this behaviour enraged me, to my dismay the barber justified the prejudiced behaviour of his fellow barbers by saying that the regular customers of their shop do not want him to shave and cut hair of patients of *that* hospital. I strongly condemned him for such a biased attitude but he stood by his words and countered me with the rhetoric: "even you will not like to get a hair-cut after seeing the patients at my shop". I remained speechless, however this incident helped me to reflect more on the way prejudice and stigma work in our society.

I have been trained in Linguistics and used my training to understand the representation of disability and gender in language in general and proverbs in particular. While doing the research, I found myself in a kind of journey in which I rediscovered myself as a person who broke the shackles of his biased notions of the world and perceived every person just as a human beyond the notion of ability, gender, caste, and race. However, this is not to be construed as a romanticism like "giving voice" or "raising signage" on behalf of disabled people but rather be a part of the process. I believe that any reformatory politics like Critical Disability Studies requires a self-conscious inclination towards the processes through which ability and disability are established as an identity and a role.

§ 6.0

Ritika Gulyani

The emergence of this journal can be found within the small reading group that came into existence in 2012. The 11th meeting of the group was the first one I attended, partly because it was organised in Jawaharlal Nehru University, where I was then perusing my M.Phil. Over the years, the reading group has evolved from a place to understand the various nuances of looking at disability to an arena where disability is critically questioned. The reading group, and subsequently the journal that has now emerged from it, looks at disability studies with a critical lens and makes an attempt to dwell deeper into why the

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[16] Campbell, F.K. (2009). Contours of Ableism: Territories, Objects, Disability and Desire. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

[17] Wolbring, G. (2014). Ability Privilege: A needed addition to privilege studies. In *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 12.2, pp. 118-141.

perspectives emerge the way they do, as well as to bring to the fore the idea that there need not be a singular linear understanding of what disability is. By engaging with texts, as well as the authors of the texts, one is exposed to a myriad of perspectives.

Not only is the critical angle of looking at disability studies vital, but also the positionality of the author as well as of the reader. The emergence of voices of the Global South has brought about a change in the way narratives are presented as well as in their content by bringing to light hitherto unknown social factors in the context of the narratives of the North. Issues of caste, class, poverty, gender, development religion, region and the likes are intertwined in the everyday lives of the individual, whether disabled or not.

Finally, it is not just the postionality within a region, but also how one is placed along the abled-disabled continuum that plays a role. As a researcher who is non-disabled and is looking at the questions of disability, constitute a contextuality and positioning that throws open its own set of questions. But reducing this to a question of us versus them, also simplifies a very complex matter. The voices and perspectives and experiences are a very important part of the process, for these to be brought forth by people who themselves might have not experienced it should ideally not rob it of its authenticity.

The journal hopes to question the predominantly existing structures by bringing forth perspectives that constantly question them and hopes to emerge as a platform that may add to work on critical disability studies that is so critically needed within the Global South.

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Disability studies and human encounters[1]

Dan Goodley

ABSTRACT

What does it mean to be human in 2020? How might disability help us answer this question? What knowledge is already out there – from scholarly studies of disability and the global politics of the disabled people's movement – that we might draw upon to think again what it means to be human? And if one element of humanity is our desire to relate to and with one another, how might we extend our human relationships in these difficult geo-political times? Might we foreground disability as the driving subject in conceptualising and practicing our mutual engagements with one another during the current pandemic? These are just some of the questions we are trying to address in our interdisciplinary research centre dedicated to the study of the human at the University of Sheffield; iHuman. And these are questions that I will seek to tackle through this brief exposition of disability studies.

Introduction

What does it mean to be human in 2020? How might disability help us answer this question? What knowledge is already out there – from scholarly studies of disability and the global politics of the disabled people's movement – that we might draw upon to think again what it means to be human? And if one element of humanity is our desire to relate to and with one another, how might we extend our human relationships in these difficult geo-political times? Might we foreground disability as the driving subject in conceptualising and practicing our mutual engagements with one another during the current pandemic? These are just some of the questions we are trying to address in our interdisciplinary research centre dedicated to the study of the human at the University of Sheffield; iHuman.[2] And these are questions that I will seek to tackle through this brief exposition of disability studies.

But first a few background considerations to get out there. I write this at a time when Britain has left the European Union. I remain a committed 'remainer' and I acknowledge here the damage done by Brexit. This damage is not simply economic. It is worse than that. It is cultural and psychological. Brexit builds up barriers and walls between the UK and the rest of the world. The message it sends out to other countries and their citizens is xenophobic, isolationist, elitist and plain racist. Brexit has hit me and many of my friends and family hard. This pain is felt psychoemotionally and politically. *It just feels so inhuman*. And the impact will not just be felt by those in Europe looking onto the island

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[1] This paper is an unpublished, minimally updated version of the original, written for a prospective book titled *Disability Studies: A Reader*, edited by Anita Ghai, and, indeed, was cited in Whitburn and Goodley (2019) as such.

[2] http://ihuman.group.shef.ac.uk/

of Britain. We risk changing the perspectives of all people from all countries who, understandably, will view the UK as a segregationist island nation state literally and metaphorically cast off as distinct from others. 'No man is an island' wrote John Donne but Britain definitely feels like one. And let us acknowledge too that Brexit and Trump are not coincidental events. The latter fed off the former and worked on a cocktail of disconnection, unemployment, racism and a lack of trust in the political elite.

After stating all of the above, over the last couple of years in the UK we have witnessed a re-energisation of left politics; evidenced by affiliations with the Black Lives Matter movement. While it is a shame that we are still Brexiteers, there is definitely – and defiantly – an optimistic atmosphere in Britain that appeals to a collectivist politics. This is exactly the kind of activism associated with the disabled people's movement and social theories emerging from the scholarship of disability studies. In this paper I want to indirectly address the questions of disability and the human posed at the start of my chapter. By indirect I mean that the questions posed are hugely complex and difficult to answer in absolution. Instead I use the questions as provocative statements that will push me to consider how we might draw on disability theory to think more productively of how we live with one another as human beings in these politically turbulent times. While scarred by Brexit, Trump and the pandemic we might seek solace and inspiration in social theories of disability. While some of these theories are explicitly political in the sense of seeking to understand and eradicate the discrimination faced by disabled people, I also understand disability as a phenomenon from which to think about how we might live our lives together (Goodley, 2020). So, let us engage with a number of disability positions with the question of the human kept firmly in the foreground of our considerations.

Disability studies

Robert McRuer's 2018 book *Crip Times* documents the many ways across different nations in which disabled people have been at the vanguard of political responses to austerity, marginalisation and inequity. While disability is often ignored by radical politicised collectives, McRuer rightly makes the case, in my opinion, that disability is *the* source of radical manifestos and alternatives to global capitalism and neoliberalisation. But this argument is not new. As Mike Oliver (1990) argued in the *Politics of Disablement*; if one is thinking of addressing oppression then one would do well to start with disability politics. Just as working class, feminist and black politics have re-centred the marginalised other as the epicentre of community from which to rethink how we live our lives together, so the disabled people's movement provides another kinship network for growing positive alternatives. Oliver saw no distinction between his Marxist politics sharpened in his trade union work and his disability activism refined through his involvement with the disabled people's movement. This approach to disability studies – originating in Britain and incubated by a powerful disabled people's movement – politicises the lives of disabled people. It considers the dehumanising practices associated with contemporary modes of economic production, cultural practices and social norms that treat disability as a pathological object in need of cure and rehabilitation. Practices of medicalisation (where we narrowly conceptualise disability in terms of impaired senses, physiology or cognition as understood through limiting medical concepts) and psychologisation (where disability is reduced to nothing more than a problem of the mind and body) constitute disability as deficiency. Disabled people, unsurprisingly, often experience relational moments with other people (especially non-disabled people) as demanding and difficult. Why? Because disabled people are related to as a problem: a deficiency, a lack or a failing of the body or mind. The rules of the game are already set – disability is a problem that society seeks to solve (Michalko, 2002). Disability studies unpacks, understands and then refutes the foundations on which are built the social oppression of many disabled people.

Studies of disability seek to understand the conditions of disablism: the exclusion of people with impairments and the undermining of their sense of self and personhood (see Thomas, 2007). The three remaining perspectives that I outline below build on these social oppression theories to develop what we now understand as critical disability studies (Meekosha and Shuttleworth, 2009; Shildrick, 2012; Goodley, 2012, 2014, 2016). Critical disability studies is a sub-theme or emergent area of scholarship and activism that starts with disability but never ends with it. Critical disability studies came as a response to postmodernism (see Shildrick, 2012) and late capitalism (articulated by Meekosha and Shuttlework, 2009). In addition, I would posit, critical disability studies seek to establish the human at the centre of analysis. While social oppression theories have been fundamental to the theoretical landscape of disability studies – indeed, it would be fair to say that there would be no disability studies without their foundation – at times one wonders where the human is in these largely structuralist analyses of oppression and discrimination. Too often disability is worked on as an object and condition of capitalism; this risks dehumanizing the very subject of disability studies – disabled people. A critical disability studies response might, in part, be conceptualised as rehumanising the field. So, let us consider three critical disability studies sitpoints that permit us to merge the desire to understand disability and the human.

Crip studies

Crip perspectives articulate the possibilities of disability (McRuer, 2006, 2012, 2018; McRuer and Wilkerson, 2003). The word crip is pulled out of its pathological associations with the derogatory term 'cripple' and is reappropriated as a term of deference and disruption. Much has been made of crip theory's potential in terms of the arts and politics but one of the excited applications as far as I understand it is the celebration of disability to reenergise human relationships. To 'crip' relationships is to attend to the myriad ways in which disability might offer new ways of relating with one another. Through our relationships we might understand and approach the essence of one another in different ways to the ones we might have started with. One example I like to think of is the example of profound intellectual disabilities. Consider the anonymised case of John who has this label. John does not use words to speak but communicates through technology and via close friends, family members and supporters who are in tune with his style of communicating. He lives in his home situated some 100 metres down the road from his parents. 24/7 John has different personal assistants, supporters, carers, family members who come in to offer support. John keeps down a job delivering promotional materials around the neighbourhood. He goes to local music concerts and is often found in the local pub with family and friends especially on a Thursday night. Traditionally, and by that I mean from an individualising or medicalising stance, profound intellectual disabilities denotes lack, deficiency and incapacity. Such perspectives have little to say about the humanity of people so-labelled. A crip perspective reads profound intellectual disabilities in a different way: to consider what disability gives to the world and to other human beings. From a crip orientation John provides employment opportunities. He boasts an extended network of friends and supporters. He provides numerous prospects for other people to relate to him and one another. And John enjoys rich affiliations with his community. He also participates through his work and leisure. Crip studies short-circuit well-worn pathological tropes associated with disability. Crip studies encourage us to find the potential in our human relationships. Our human connections constitute complex assemblages. We become who we are through the material and immaterial interdependencies that hold us in place, tension and connection with other humans (and non-humans for that matter) (see Michael Feely, 2016). Such a viewpoint resonates with new materialist theories that attend to the relational networks that we are plugged into (see Susan Flynn, 2017 for a wonderfully written overview of these emergent ideas). Social oppression theories of disability risk conceptualising disability as a marker of exclusion. In contrast, a crip perspective encourages us think of disability as a marker of extended relationalities. Disability demands interconnection. Disability petitions for interdependency; cripping the commonsenseical notion that a life worth lived is a life lived independently. And it is these very taken-for-granted ideas associated with independence that critical disability studies must contest, as we shall consider in the next perspective.

Critical studies of ableism

Critical studies of ableism ask us to consider the kind of individual valued by contemporary society. Global austerity measures and neoliberalisation of our everyday life have led to a receding welfare state (in those countries that had one in the first place) and a retracting government (a move from left-leaning involvement in private matters of the home). Individual citizens (and those close to them like their families) are left to take control as self-sufficient autonomous agents who are responsible for their standards of living, well-being and work. Independence and individual sovereignty mark the preferred citizen of our times and encourage particular kinds of relationships with one another. We are encouraged to draw ever thicker lines of the boundaries between ourselves and others. In times of austerity it makes no sense to be contaminated by the neediness of others. In contrast, we must occupy the idealised consumer-labourer of late capitalism; the self-sufficient global citizen responsible for themselves (and their immediate family where relevant). Ableism is, according to Fiona Kumari Campbell (2009), the ideology of individualism that demands able-bodied and minded self-governance and autonomy. Ableism lurks behind every articulation of individual achievement. It shapes the social contours of everyday life to the extent that even those of a radical disposition embrace its logics. Critical pedagogues, Marxist revolutionaries and anarchistic activists are prone to ableist assumptions that state that given the right social and political conditions human beings are ready, willing and able to take on responsibility for their own emancipation. But these assume an able participant with the potential to take up the challenge. Rarely are society's activists disabled people. Critical studies of ableism seek to throw a proverbial spanner into the workings of contemporary political life.

Recently I have developed the concept of neoliberal-ableism to account for the elision of national economic independence with individual and cultural celebrations of autonomy (Goodley, 2014). This particular cultural economy ties individual and national progress to independence and, by virtue of this, associates happiness with self-sufficiency. The kinds of human valued by contemporary culture become ever more narrow and individualised as the ideology of ableism threatens to colonise our mindsets. To ask for help, assistance or support is a request at odds with a wider cultural politics that values self-sufficiency. Fortunately, critical disability studies has the potential to chip away at the façade of ableism: revealing its empty promises. In reality we all fail to match up to the ideals of neoliberal-ableism. Cast off as atomistic individuals responsible only for ourselves, we risk being reduced to an ontological loneliness.

Critical studies of ableism remind us that autonomy is a myth perpetuated by late capitalist reformations of the role of the State in the lifeworlds of individual citizens. Independence is an empty signifier that we would do well to resist. We do not have to simply accept the globalised discourse of self-governance; we can pursue a politics of 'For the many not the few'. Here we may learn much from our disability studies scholars writing in the Global South. The work, for example, of the Indian scholar and critical feminist psychologist Anita Ghai (2002, 2006, 2014) provides but one key resource for us to contest the individualisation of everyday life. Her work develops an interdependent analysis of psychology that owes as much to her Indian context as it does to her psychological training. Her work reminds us that the self can only ever develop in relation to the other and this intertwining of self/other is key to more collectivist notions of personhood found in countries outside of the confines of Western Europe and North America. Ableism is yet another imperialist project that requires resistance. In contrast, the ground-breaking work of Ghai and other Global South scholars repositions analyses of disability in the majority world. Contributors to the open access journal open up new ways of approaching disability.[3]

Dis/ability studies

My third theoretical approach considers the ways in which we encounter one another. Human beings have a desire to relate to and with one another. This is not the same as saying that all human beings enjoy relating to other human beings. Nor should we assume that there is some standardised acceptable way of relating with others. Whether one likes

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[3] *Disability and the Global South*, https://dgsjournal.org/.

another human being or not, human activity inevitably is and leads to the making of various relationships. And out of these relationships we come to know one another. Let me introduce something into this consideration of relationships. Let me bring in disability in the form of blindness: something I am learning about through a set of particular relationships. When I think back over my lifetime, I know that I have had some kind of relationship with blindness. I remember childhood books and TV shows where blindness was presented to me as a tragedy. I recall conversations between friends along the lines of 'what would you prefer, blindness or deafness' (a strange question when none of us had experienced either). I have in my memory TV news items and documentaries about medical treatments for blindness (perhaps claims for cure) and I also remember watching a show on guide dogs. I try to think harder here, to unblock any repressed memories, but I soon find myself moving into a period of my life that I will term 'From the social model onwards'. During my first degree in psychology I came across the social model of disability and, like many, found this utterly liberating (Goodley, 2020). This approached segued neatly with my Marxist student politics at the time. Its structural offerings complemented the economic explanation of Karl and Fred. The social model repositioned disability as a social rather than individual pathology. But where was blindness in this? How was blindness represented?

Blindness is known by the social model as a sensory impairment that fits badly with a society geared up for sight. Children with visual impairments have endured an historical legacy of segregation: separated from their sighted peers into specialist schools (captured in the emotive piece of Colin Barnes, 1996). I devoured texts that explained the pathologisation of impairment, the discrimination and oppression of disabled people by a wider society designed for able-bodied and minded people. I also learnt to hate special education as a dangerous specialised knowledge that constituted people with impairments as merely objects of expert knowledge from medicine and psychology. Yet, thinking back, I learnt nothing about blindness. I knew an activist with a visual impairment but when we spoke, we only spoke of disablism. I once tried to speak of impairment with a work colleague with a visual impairment who reminded me of the social model mantra developed by Mike Oliver (1996) that disability is a public concern but impairment is a private and personal matter. I shut up quickly. Fair enough.

And then I met Rod Michalko and his partner Tanya Titchkosky, both disability studies academics from the University of Toronto. We quickly bonded over a shared love of the Beatles and storytelling and then, in what seemed like a whirlwind, my partner Rebecca Lawthom and our two kids Ruby and Rosa were sharing holidays with Rod and Tanya. This is when I started to actually learn about blindness. And its hidden referent; sightedness. *Learning* is the key term here. I am not sure if I have *learnt* anything. I do know that with Rod, Tanya, Rebecca, Ruby and Rosa we are learning about blindness amongst other stuff. This other stuff includes the weather in Winnipeg, the Northern Quarter in Manchester, Nottingham Forest Football Club, American baseball, parenting young adults, being a young adult with parents who are learning to be parents of young adults, low salt recipes, pulling out crab meat, Canadian rock n roll, Welsh culture. And blindness. And sightedness. Let me say something about learning about blindness.

I suppose in one sense, before knowing Rod and Tanya, I had been formally (perhaps academically) learning about blindness through reading Rod's texts (e.g. Michalko, 1999, 2002) and Tanya's (Titchkosky, 2003, 2011) and their joint work (Titchkosky and Michalko, 2009). This is all very well and good but given a choice between a book or a beer and I would probably go for the latter (okay, definitely beer over books, if I am being truly honest). Rod and Tanya's books have been profoundly impactful because of the message they give about disability more generally and blindness more specifically: that we come to understand ourselves and complex phenomena such as disability, blindness, sightedness, humanity through our relationships with one another. As phenomenological sociologists Michalko and Titchkosky urge us to spend some time with the human condition; to figure out how we relate to ourselves and with one another. This is precisely the rehumanising that I alluded to earlier when introducing critical disability studies. While both Rod and Tanya are cognizant of social oppression theories – and draw analytical traces from these perspectives into their work – they are also interested in the human condition and the place, resonance and possibilities of disability to think again about what it means to be human. These theoretical assertions have taken on more life through my relationships with Rod, Tanya and those close to us, including Rebecca, Ruby and Rosa. Through our spending time together we continue to learn about one another and, I would assert, to learn about disability. And we do so, I think, through our relating with one another. And this connecting with one another – like any good relationship – is about anticipating one another's moves, of checking out with one another what we are doing now and what we might do next. And, most importantly of all, learning is at its most heady and exciting when we are just getting on with being with one another. The word 'just' in the last sentence should not be read as a denigration of the mundane. In contrast, the mundane is precisely where it is at and the level of the mundane is where we do most of our relating and also our learning (a central observation to be found in the work of Rod and Tanya).

So, what examples of learning can I give you? And, just as importantly, which precious stories of friendship with Rod, Tanya and our close others am I prepared to share? Let me try a couple of stories.

Driving blind

We are in a Chinese restaurant in a small town in Ontario, Canada (sadly not Winnipeg which we will holiday in one day). The meal has been a success. Ruby and Rosa have eaten their body weight in ice cream, I managed to find the salt n pepper squid, and Rod, Tanya and Rebecca have been enjoyed the Coors Lite © and red wine respectively. I am on the diet coke. It is lunchtime after all. Finished, we stand up as Rod produces his white stick. He quickly unfolds it from its three-section-snap-down-resting-position and releases it like a piece to tap the floor in style. Rod grabs Tanya's arm and they follow me as we leave towards the door. Impatient, as always, I take the lead. The hired car is just outside in the parking lot. Rebecca and the girls are close behind Rod and Tanya. Rod then has a lightbulb moment. Rod pulls to a stop. He happens to be by a busy table of a family of six. He asks, 'Dan, shall I drive?'. I reply. 'Sure, here are the keys'. I throw the keys. They beautifully land and nestle in Rod's right hand. His left hand clutches the white cane. The family of six onlookers nearly drop their chopsticks in shock.[4]

Welsh nights

It is a late Saturday evening. Rod, Tanya and I are with a group of friends in a big open plan kitchen. It is beautifully chaotic or so I believe. The Barbecue has been worked to perfection even in the rolling winds and rain that hit the patio of the farmhouse. We are staying in the hills of North Wales; a place on the planet where you can experience four seasons in one day. Food has been eaten and the drinks are still following. A guitar is pulled out. Someone is singing. Badly. Glasses are raised. Cheers are made. Pots clash in the sink as the washing up is done.

Rod and I sit together touching shoulders.

'What did you say?' Rod asks.

I lean further in and, slightly tipsy, mumble some story, no doubt dull, of office politics to Rod.

He offers nothing back.

'Did you get that Rod?', I ask.

'Sorry, no, what did you say?'

I reoffer the story.

'What!', Rod shouts.

'Rod, I'm leaving the room', shouts Tanya.

Someone plays a New Order song through the WiFi speaker.

These narratives can be interpreted in a number of ways (see for example Whitburn and Goodley, 2019). However, before reading these stories I want to consider an analytical approach that might help us frame the two stories and this is dis/ability studies (Goodley, 2014). This perspective encourages us to attend to the ways in which disability and ability are always reliant upon one another for their constitution. By this I suggest that whenever we think of encountering disability we will find ability close by. Indeed, in order for disability to reveal itself it has to do so, often, as in direct opposition to ability. And, crucially, ability needs disability as its referent. Dis/ability studies seek to explore the ways in which disability communities, imaginaries and politics are always enacted, shaped and constituted through disability's relationship with ability. In order to demonstrate this argument, let us read the two stories.

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[4] This story was cited in Whitburn and Goodley (2019).
and cited as Goodley, D. (Forthcoming a), in prospective book edited by edited by A. Ghai (see Note 1, for further details).

In many ways *Welsh nights* reads like a good night out. Indeed, it was a helluva party. But what other stories could we offer? The social model might read *Welsh nights* as the constitution of an inaccessible space by thoughtless sighted people. This is probably a fair analysis but it does not – and should not – stop there. Phenomenological studies of disability offer at their very outset the opportunity to consider how we become in the world through our bodies as our bodies touch other humans and non-humans. Dis/ability studies would attend to the ways in which blindness and sightedness imaginaries appear in the background of the narrative. A blind imaginary rears itself when Tanya excuses herself from the table and during the touch of shoulders. This is an imaginary that starts with blindness as the opening encounter. It is an imaginary that does not assume sight. A sighted imaginary is found in those moments when, too often, people in the room fail to communicate. This is clunky communication that fails at particular moments.

In *Driving Blind*, the reason that the joke works is because 'the blind guy' catches the keys on his way to drive the car. For one moment he is misrecognised as a blind man driving a car. Rod's seeming abilities (note the *see* in seeming) contrast markedly with the cultural imaginary we associate with blindness and driving (in short, blind people are not expected to drive cars). But blindness is not simply a signifier of lack or deficiency. Blindness in this story opens up some fascinating moments of human encounter. The white cane signifies the presence of blindness and permits the wonder of the gag to occur. Blindness is an important element of the encounter of those human beings caught up in that moment but it is not the only important element. Other elements relate to expectations around driving. Driving blind is also a story of performance; a moment where expectations of onlookers were disrupted. A time when individuals might not be clear on how to react. A public encounter that was wholly unexpected; one not foreseen. Dis/ability studies seek to consider the interplay of disability and ability, blindness and sightedness, abnormality and normality, the unanticipated and the already expected. And this interplay takes place at the level of human relationships.

Conclusions

In this paper I have tried to unpack a number of theoretical responses to disability. Each has particular merits and provide theoretical angles that sharpen our understandings of the relationship between disability and human relationships. The burgeoning field of critical disability studies has gifted us with a number of analytical tropes to make sense of the problem and promise of disability. By problem, I am referring here to the ways in which disabled people are cast off as unwanted elements of society. Disabled people risk being dehumanised as they are understood only as a conundrum in terms of the demands they make on normative society. The promise of disability lies in its potential to centre relationships in the foreground of our explorations of what it means to be human. And it is this potential that we need to realise especially in these unprecedented times (Goodley, 2020).

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Indian Contributions to Thinking about Studies in Ableism: Challenges, Dangers and Possibilities

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ABSTRACT

The article suggests ways to foster quality and rigour in research production around 'south Asian' experiences. This project is fundamental from an ethical perspective in terms of undertaking quality and rigorous research publications, but also to challenge some common research practices amongst non-occidental and occidental scholars. Disability studies in the sub-continent needs to be critical of the uncritical reception of occidental critical disability studies into our realm, along with its scaffolding of conceptual formations such as ideas of Self–kin relations, agency, sexualities, identity politics, to name a few areas. The article first explores the idea of 'south Asianness' or indeed 'Indian' as a default, fictionalised space producing a monologue, due to colonisation and the 'idea of the 'captive mind'. Secondly, I provide an overview of the notion of ableism and its relation to systems of dehumanisation and identity. There is an interlude into examining caste and ableism and the re-emergence of scientific racism. The final section of the article turns toward aspects within Indian philosophical traditions that provide *new opportunities* for a distinctive Indian form of disability studies, namely heterodox argumentation and the strands of an integrative ethos.

> The point of feminist comparative travel is not to discover new concepts, ideas, and problems that we can fit into our own frames of reference or worlds of sense, but to shift our frames altogether so that we see things differently from another perspective, a unique angle, and the standpoint of a new location.
>
> (Butnor and McWeeny, 2014, 11)

The opening epigram of this article has been extracted to set the tone of explorations around some of the challenges and common 'mistakes' in undertaking both conceptual and empirical research embedded within south Asian contexts related to practices of disability and ableism. The article suggests ways to foster quality and rigour in research production around 'south Asian', in particular 'Indian' experiences as this is the focus of the journal. This project is fundamental from an ethical perspective in terms of undertaking quality and rigorous research publications, but also to challenge some common research practices amongst non-occidental and occidental scholars. Disability studies in the sub-continent needs to be critical of the uncritical reception of occidental (critical) disability studies into our realm, along with its scaffolding of conceptual formations such as ideas of Self-kin relations, agency, sexualities, identity politics, to name a few areas. This critique extends to the coerced conditions of sub-continent research production in writing for the international marketplace which induces the usage of a

Eurocentric conceptual apparatus so that our analysis is intelligible; there needs to be a recognition of the politics of research production.

The article first explores an idea of 'south Asianness' or indeed 'Indianness' as a default, fictionalised space producing a monologue, due to colonisation and the idea of the 'captive mind'. Secondly, I provide an overview of the notion of ableism and its relation to the systems of dehumanisation and identity. There is an interlude into examining caste and ableism and the re-emergence of scientific racism. The final section of the article turns toward aspects within Indian philosophical traditions that provide new opportunities for a distinctive Indian form of disability studies, namely heterodox argumentation and the strands of an integrative ethos.

Delimitations

In this article the concept of ableism goes beyond disability; indeed, ableism need not refer to disability at all. The conceptualisation of ableism requires a shift from a focus on disability to the idea of ableness, perfection and what is configured to be fully human. Additionally, when I do refer to disability, I am not using disability in the sense of a metaphor; disability experiences are real and material. The Journal has as its focus Indian critical disability studies and whilst this article focuses on India, parts of the discussion have relevance to South Asian perspectives.

Colonised Cages – Where to, Next?

Current research relations as they stand means that scholars need to have an ideological commitment to an idea of South Asia on one hand and also simultaneously researchers have an academic necessity through the dominance of 'area' studies'. No intellectual or cultural practice can occur in a vacuum devoid of a sense of history, social stratification, temporality, place, and national politics. How do disability studies researchers configure our disciplinarity within a regional framework of South Asia? This prompts a further question, what is meant by 'Asia', and more specifically 'South Asia' or 'Indianness'? Where is the place of localised and ethno-religious contexts? Are there research opportunities for symbiosis, continuity and connections which cut across countries in our region that transgress temporalities in the realm of culture. The *Indian Journal of Critical Disability Studies* can be one of these projects.

The terminology of South Asia is itself clouded in a dense discursive fogginess. When we talk of south Asia in particular, south Asian disability studies, do we mean studies 'of', 'for' or 'in' South Asia? South Asian disability studies is not a monolith of equal partnerships; instead, there is the dominance of a regionalised Indian disability studies and relatively little disability studies research and conceptual development produced in other countries, especially in English such as in Bhutan, the Maldives and Sri Lanka. Be that as it may, developing a critical south Asian disability studies and thinking beyond conventional approaches to understanding disability and corporeal difference in various locations in the region, enables a problematisation of our disciplinary practises and histories which are inherently linked to those locations.

A caveat to the study of abledness and disability relates to the necessity of thinking about the making of disability and abledness through the lens of nation making. Caution is needed in assuming that particular versions of local 'knowledges' are 'pure' and authentic rather than being fabrications of knowledges developed by outside experts who assume that certain ways of doing things are 'local' or are a composite of intermingling or extractive practices. A first hint of ableist framings of marginalised populations, for example, can be seen in the denotation of that marginality through the lens of 'disabilities'. In the repealed *Untouchability (Offences) Act*, No.22 of 1955, 'disabilities' is not used as in equivalency with disabled people, however the characterisation of asymmetrical practices as 'disabilities' is more in line with the idea of handicaps. As will be discussed later in the paper, this rendering is not coincidental, for the caste system *inter alia*, enacts ableist practices by way of producing the notion of 'disabilities' and degeneracy at a group, classificatory morphological level. 'Disabilities' whether that be in terms of handicap or material disability are designated as a negative relation.

Captive Minds, Conceptual Borders and Methodological Traps

What of the tenor, rigour and reliability of research about disability and marginalisation in India – is it a 'true' representation of peoples' daily lives and are researcher standpoints made explicit? What hermeneutics are engaged to understand these realities? Alatas (1972, 1974) remonstrated the idea of the 'captive mind' – a particular way of thinking that is dominated by Eurocentric thought in an imitative and uncritical manner that global south scholars through practice and coercion *imitate* and *privilege* western approaches to knowledge systems like views of individualism, autonomy, family, the Self, methods like problem description and selection, including what research questions are asked and prioritised, generalisation, generalisation and interpretation, and practice frameworks or civil society interventions. Western philosophies, conceptual schemas and research frameworks, specifically in our case, disability studies, has become the *benchmark* for thinking about both disablement and ablement. Such a captive mind then becomes an "uncritical and imitative mind dominated by an external source, whose thinking is deselected from an independent perspective" (Alatas, 1974, 692).

Furthermore, as Singhi (1987) argues, this kind of dominance or tilt towards western epistemologies has "…led to the trained incapacity of many contemporary Indian intellectuals to *construct cognitive alternatives* and to examine their own intellectual traditions as revealed in classical texts" (Singhi, 1987, 3, emphasis added). A fundamental critique is that the adoption of western conceptualisations (for example disability, ideas of shame, also the organisation of sex-gender distinctions), has distorted the analysis of Indian social realities producing a dissonance between the western paradigms and the exergies of Indian society. In reviewing manuscripts about non-western countries, I have noticed that many global south researchers uncritically appropriate research findings and concepts developed from outside their country. This is especially true of research from the US and

UK and it assumes, in an unfettered way, that these findings or conceptualisations, without any adaption, apply to their non-western country context. An example of alternative approaches are the concepts of women's agency and autonomy (Fonseka & Schulz, 2018), care ethics (Dalmiya, 2016), ideas of family (Chapin, 2018) and notions of a 'third gender' (Miller, 2012). This regurgitation of untested concepts of analysis appear to have a life of their own and hence transmogrifying as truth norms.

You cannot simply 'lift' one approach to theorisation and associated nomenclatures and transpose them to another social grouping, be that at the level of epistemology, methodology or not taking into account investments in social identities. There are some tricky territories from which to compare, for example the intersections and separation of the concepts of caste, class and race (Cox, 1959; de Reuck & Knight, 1967; Menon, 2006; Sen, 2005). Baxi (2011), in discussing critical etymology discusses the development of Euro-American words, which he argues has developed 'controlled meanings' globally. In making comparisons, there are wording decisions and we need to be mindful that "vernacular languages also encode functional equivalents of epistemic domination" (Baxi, 2011, 61). One example that springs to mind, is the Pali term *dukka* which has been rendered in English to mean 'suffering'. However, this rendition distorts the meaning of this term. A heightened translation, *dukka* more closely resembles the idea of dissatisfaction which has quite a different texture to suffering.

Baxi (2011, 62) argues for pairing, word by word, the vocabulary of the dominant and the dominated, "… and in doing so there begins the possibility of locating comparable and comparative understandings". In his discussion on undertaking comparative Indian phenomenology, Ram-Prasad (2018, 4) notes that any comparativist project around classical Indian understandings of the body, need to acknowledge "the historical specificity of phenomenology's emergence as a philosophical programme in the West". The particular use, care and explanation which Ram-Prasad utilises the phenomenological approach in his Indian exegetical research "… then becomes clear; otherwise, the reader may rightfully query the origin and utilisation of 'phenomenology' as a comparative category". Paying heed to the warnings of Baxi (2011) and Ram-Prasad (2018) and the complexities of 'comparison' and 'similarity' (Bhatti & Kimmich, 2018; Campbell, 2019; Felski & Friedman, 2013), are essential.

It is not enough for Indian disability studies scholars to do *more* research, because they often will labour under the weight of eurocentrism, which is not just an episteme; as Patel puts it, "it is also a way to organise the production, distribution, consumption, and reproduction of knowledge unequally across the different parts of the world" (Patel,2018; 98) – it is time to develop alternative epistemologies and methodologies to uncover ableist processes within Indian practices. The irony is that the conceptual structures in Indian philosophical tradition also claim universal applicability; this may not be known and even if there is insight, the global relations of research production diminish the possibilities of subjecting western formulations of humankind to Indian philosophical scrutiny (Krishna, 1987). I now turn to a summary of Studies on Ableism.

Ableism – what does it mean?

Since the emergence of *Studies in Ableism* in 2001, there have been unexpected consequences; these consequences are discussed in Campbell (2019). In the early days, the term, the little-known concept of ableism, was rarely used in disability studies research, let alone in the vernacular of disability activism. With the emergence of social media there has been an avalanche of references of the word 'ableism' on Facebook, Redditt and Twitter. When an activist or researcher is using the term *ableism*, that term needs to be defined or explored at the outset. Elsewhere, Campbell (2009, 2019) has argued that ableism is not merely a case of ignorance or negative attitudes. If that was the case, surely the strategy would be to engage in a mass re-education programme, of whose aim is to overturn and create positive attitudes towards disabled people and those considered different by society. In one generation our work would be done! Instead Campbell (2009, 2019) has argued that ableism has a process and practice that is multi-factorial, complex, changeable and comparative.

Ableism is everyone's business, not because of some ideological imperative but because we as living creatures, human and animal, are affected by the spectre and spectrum of the 'abled' body. It is critical that ableism stops being thought of as just a disability issue (Campbell, 2009). Ablement, the process of becoming 'abled', impacts on daily routines, interactions, speculations and, significantly, imagination. While all people are affected by ableism, we are not all impacted by ableist practices in the same way. Due to their positioning, some individuals actually benefit and become entitled by virtue of institutional ableism in different settings. When writing about the denotation of disability within courts of law, Campbell (2001) observed that ableism as a knowledge system was used to ascertain or nullify defining disability. She framed ableism as:[1]

> a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species typical and therefore essential and fully human. Disability then is cast as a diminished state of being human
>
> (Campbell 2001, 44).

This way of understanding ableism held for over a decade, however, Campbell (2019) articulated the need to be more specific about its key characteristics that she and others had observed not just about the rendering of 'disability', but also the marking out of other marginalised peoples:

> . . . system of causal relations about the order of life that produces processes and systems of entitlement and exclusion. This causality fosters conditions of microaggression, internalized ableism and, in their jostling, notions of (un) encumbrance.… A system of dividing practices, ableism institutes the reification

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[1] There is no space to fully discuss here the spectrum of ableism conceptually and its practices, as has been conceptualised in my work; I recommend visiting my Academia.edu page for further discussion: https://dundee.academia.edu/FionaKumariCampbell. There are many papers about ableism.

> and classification of populations. Ableist systems involve the *differentiation, ranking, negation, notification and prioritization of sentient life*
>
> (Campbell, 2017, cited in Campbell, 2019, 147).

The point of Studies in Ableism is to turn the spotlight on the idea of abledness and how ablement is preserved. In other words, to invert our gaze and examine the rendition of abledness, ablebodiedness, the basis of becoming (en)abled. These *dividing practices*, which could be through classification systems or legal definitions, invoke a series of dehumanising practices that result in the disqualification of a human person or indeed demarcations between the human and non-human. Indeed there is an impassable divide between human and animal, with some like Peter Singer (1979), arguing that certain clusters of humans (intellectually disabled or aged people), have defined characteristics that disqualify them, and so they should have less rights claims to other 'higher forms' of life. Conversely, there are examples of certain categories of 'human' who have been persistently deemed animalistic such as Jews (Roskies, 1984; Volkov, 2006), homosexuals (Plant, 1986), Dalits (Chakravarti, 2018; Ramanujam, 2020; Velassery & Patra, 2018) and even women as a sex class (Criado Perez, 2019; Islam, 2020; Teltumbde, 2020; Ussher, 1991, Volkov, 2006). These examples show that the conceptualisation of ableism extends beyond a narrow understanding of 'disability', for at times we see the confluence of race, class and sex classes with disability.[2] To reiterate again when discussing ableism, 'disability' as traditionally understood, may not feature as part of that discussion; instead other aspects of ableist humanisation are the focus.

Ableism operates through the apparatus of 'animalisation' through, as typified by the Indian caste system, through "descending scale of contempt" (Velassery & Patra, 2018, 25), indicative of ableist practices of ranking and negation. Commonly we refer to dehumanisation in the scaling of humans, but what is really meant is the levers of the 'inhuman'. A life here is denoted as 'brute', disposal or not having grievable capacity (they are of less value and hence are unmournable). This idea of life prioritises the sheer biological fact of life in contrast with the way a life is lived and esteemed. Campbell's (2017) understanding of ableism as having five prongs is useful for thinking about political and strategic interventions and approaching research:

- Differentiation (neoliberal technicism, productivity, encumbrance, citizen(ship), capabilities, contributions)
- Ranking (causation: table of mains/income/class/caste/songbun/racial apartheids)
- Negation (what it is not/outliers/disposability – clear demarcations)
- Notification (notices/documents/certifications/regulation – that prescribe enumeration)

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[2] This idea of confluence needs to be investigated with respect to methodological challenges in studying comparison and similarities between desperate areas. See Bhatti & Kimmich, 2018; Campbell, 2019; Felski & Friedman, 2013.

- Prioritisation of sentient life (access to the common-wealth, coalition building amongst minoritised peoples, claim to space & territory – bounded spaces).

Studies in Ableism Refutes Identity Politics!

There is some confusion about identity politics and its relationship to the idea of ableism which need clearing up. The theorisation of ableism is not based on an agonistic relation of conflict such as those antagonisms expressed in Marxism and some post-modernist theories. Studies in Ableism does not start from the point of delimited categories of disabled people and able-bodied people, nor is there reference to substantive group identity analysis, with reference to the idea of identity politics. In fact, the opposite is the case. Studies in Ableism draws upon the idea of an open system where various actors, conditions and causes interact, to produce processes and practices of social exclusion. To reduce humankind to that of an identity, or a discrete bordered group, is in conflict with the conceptual foundations of ableism, at least in the epistemology developed by Campbell. In *Contours of Ableism*, Campbell (2009), I make reference to the fact that able-bodiedness is understudied and thus there is the necessity to invert the gaze from disablement to abledness or what has been recently termed *ablement* (see Campbell, 2019). Indeed, my work traces genealogies of ability, and abledness and concludes that historically these are slippery categories. It is a trap to adopt linguistic terms such as 'the disabled', or 'the able bodied' as if these signifiers are self-evident, acknowledging that these terms are used strategically in an essentialised way (Spivak, 1988). Once these signifiers are problematised they become catachrestic (that is, elusive and unravelling). So, where does this holding onto identity of politics emerge?

Wendy Brown (2000) points to the terms of engagement in human rights and anti-discrimination claims, the most common of which is through the lens of identity politics. Brown rightly points out that in the development of anti-discrimination claims, the petitioner as an individual or group is required to show that they have suffered. Claims for protection of human rights are based on argument that the ascribed group has a particular particularised form of suffering and hence is in need of protection by the law. The Indian Constitution has a system of reservations and protected categories, which drawn upon prohibitory and affirmative jurisprudence (see Islam, 2020).

US constitutional law has shaped global approaches to 'identities' in human rights instruments. The global development of the civil rights movement has been influenced or at least shaped by strategies adopted by US activists; hence we speak of a 'minority group' or minority rights model, wherein organising is through identity clusters. The articulation of social justice claims globally has been through establishing certain political, moral and pragmatic identities to articulate the claims of marginal people. Secondly, you will see from what I have already described, that identity politics claims are framed by cordoning off, ring-fencing identity formation. There has been a tendency to police 'who is in, and who is out', of a group by both activists and judicial as well as government bodies. A lot of this strategy plays out in that phrase "discrete, insular minority", which is in and of itself a form of containment, a cordoning in, if you like. There is political and emotional investment by activists and governments, for different reasons, in classificatory practices and ensuring that any outliers are ejected or rejected from associations. More than this, is the idea of entrapment, the policing of identity becomes paradox, that is, in order to promote an identity, the marginal group becomes entrapped by its preconditions (qualifications for membership).

Gayatri Spivak (1988) points to the need to engage in *strategic essentialism* (almost implying certain characteristics as immutable or unique), if we are to engage in the storying and representations of our experience, including identity claims in law. Nevertheless, such essentialism needs to be used strategically if we are to work towards accessible futures for all. Many societies still rely on population designations and enumerations in order to implement distributive justice and equality measures through law and legal classifications. We give power to ableist practises, when strategic essentialism takes on the appearance of normalised relations between human beings. The concept of reason can be separated out from the constraints of identity politics. Identity can refer to those aspects of oneself: individual, moral, political, intellectual, ascetic or religious, one's interests or caste, sex or other attribute; can be a work of reason, filtered through local norms. Indian traditions present resources to individuals through its tradition of reasoning and public debate (Ganeri, 2012). I turn now to a preliminary discussion around aspects of the Indian philosophical traditions that exude either terror or possibility in research Studies in Ableism within Indian contexts. These thoughts are summative as well as provisional, there is much future work to be undertaken.

Unsettled(ing) Traditions – Discourse of Terror

There is no space within this article to appraise the concept of *karma* within Hinduism and Buddhism (considered a non-orthodox school in Indian philosophy). Suffice to say, frequently south Asian literature (including disability studies) contains unsupported claims about the philosophical meaning of *karma* (there are a multitude of interpretations, debates by philosophers and religious scholars. Additionally, there is a necessity to separate the teachings of *karma* in the form of tales) at the village level. Limited research has been undertaken furthermore, on how disabled people and their families make sense of the doctrine of *karma* and how attitudes toward disability are shaped by the concept. More urgent research needs to be undertaken. Instead, given the orientation of this article I will explore the caste system.

Cast(e)ing Ableism

> I used to be human once. So, I am told. I don't remember it myself, but people who knew me when I was small say I walked on two feet just like a human being.
>
> (Sinha, 2007, 1).

Aside from the north Korean *songbun* system where ranking and differentiation result in inequalities being assigned at birth and effects residential, employment, schooling capabilities (see Collins, 2012), there is the more well-known Indian caste system, which is also hereditary and determinative, to the extent that any gains in education, public or financial status does not change a caste designation. Those at the top have privileges, whilst those at the bottom are deemed to have 'disabilities'. The proximity of caste stratifications bears a close resemblance to the five-pronged dividing practises of ableism. As Uma Chakravarti (2018, 10, emphasis added) argues, "the basis of inequality underlying the caste system in India is the application of *evaluative – value-based - standards* in placing particular castes as high or low". Notably, that despite the enactment of anti-caste laws and affirmative measures which effect the public domain, casteism is still evident in daily acts of segregation and hospitalities in private domains (access to spaces, social intercourse and communicative householder relations). This process of spatial differentiation is alluded to by Jodhka & Manor (2018) who describe the manner of regulation of mobilities and space, which they characterise as a game of:

> … *exits and distractions*. 'Exits' may entail physical absences from the home villages – typically, moves to residences in urban sentence centres. Those absences may be for short periods – perhaps to visit sons and daughters for whom residences have been purchased – or permanent. Others may remain in their villages but withdraw or 'exit' from panchayat politics, and thus, to a great degree, from village politics.
>
> Jodhka & Manor (2018, 21)

Despite empirical evidence that those from 'lower' castes and Dalits experience significant degrees of social and economic deprivation as well as systemic and individualised violence, if not humiliation (Chakravarti, 2018; Menon, 2006; Rodrigues, 2011; Velassery & Patra), some Marxist analyses have conceptualised caste as nothing but a hidden relation of class, having no real existence, eventually fading away with the overthrow of capitalism. This idea that caste has no real existence also can be found in the works of some post-colonial theorists and Hindutva rhetoricians that connect caste with colonialism (Menon, 2006, 5). Caste is rarely associated with ableism, and instead is viewed as a self-contained religious system, effecting one albeit large country. Yet as Campbell (2020, 39) notes, the caste (in the case below, the Valmiki lower caste) produces mobility impairment and hence is another face of ablement that results in a crushing captivity or containment of movement. In "'I'm born to do this': Condemned by caste, India's sewer cleaners condemned to death", Safi (2018) documents the lives of the Valmiki caste whose mobility is restrained by the caste system to manual scavenging or, put more simply, to manually emptying of toilets and cleaning septic systems by hand without protection. Paradoxically, there is daily mobility, where 'low-caste' women visit multiple houses, cleaning waste from deep-hole toilets and moving it to a central disposal site. Ironically, India's rail ministry is the largest employer of manual scavengers.

The caste system is fundamental to the understanding and thinking about the humanisation and dehumanisation of social life. Studying caste relations, I argue, can provide insight into the operation, justification and apologetic defences of segregated, desegregated and integrated communities. To be clear, I am not equating caste with disability, or seeing caste discrimination as having *equivalence* with disability discrimination; however, I am associating caste relations within a broader field of ableism. The idea of ableism must be applied to different hierarchies of the caste system and we need to study the differential impacts, for example, on disabled people at the higher end of the hierarchy as well as disabled people deemed members of the lower castes.

Those at the lower ranks of the system or indeed beyond the caste system are considered as subhumans, less than human, in fact worse than beasts. Waghmore (2018, 116, emphasis added) speaks of the idea of untouchability as invoking an ableist association with disability: "The Untouchability Offences Act incorporated the Dalit's body *as deformed or injured property* that belongs to the state, and abolishing untouchability has also cemented 'untouchability'". We are speaking of the ranking of certain shades of human morphology using the language of *deformity*. How is caste related to ableism? Casteism can be seen as the prototype of all types of human estrangement. Ableism's focus on Negation as an element captures this radical Othering, a marked separation, producing a sense of 'us' and 'them'. Velassery & Patra (2018) define caste as a:

> … particular, historically and culturally located form of human categorisation involving visual determinants marked on the body through the interplay of perceptual practises and bodily appearance. Caste has not had one meaning or a single essential criterion, but its meanings have always been mediated through visual appearances. The criteria that determine caste identity have included ancestry experience, outside perception, internal perception, coded visibility, habits and practises – all of these and more are variously invoked for both individuals and groups
>
> (Velassery & Patra, 2018, 92).

Ableism is literally written on certain lowered caste bodies. The abled body acts as a core signifier within the caste system as it is "the primary symbol of the social body, the body politic. Bodily appearance, movement, and functions – from dress, hair, food, and toilet to excrement, sexual fluids, and menstrual discharge – are given cultural and socially determined meanings" (Ramanujam, 2020, 43). In other words, caste is an institutionalised stable form of human interaction which is maintained and reproduced by belief and behaviour. Anxieties over the retention of purity literally shape social intercourse, the securing of integrative and exclusionary space; normally associated with historically segregated and integrative practises in the West towards disabled people. The idea of untouchability is not merely a by-product of instilling codes of purity and pollution; it is, as Ramanujam (2020, 88) argues, the essence of caste, in that "touch-un-ability is always part of the subject", it inheres like a fingerprint in the person, having an immutable quality. Waghmore points to the existence of codes of Hindu politeness, in response to Dalit claims of legal discrimination. He argues that "politeness constitutes a new moral obligation of politeness across castes, including untouchables" (Waghmore, 2018, 117), which acts as a manufactured way within space of polite transaction. Politeness continues to construct Dalits and other people regarded as impure, deformed, repulsive and hence undesirable subjects.

The caste system has been informed by the *Codes or Laws of Manu*, which subordinates and dehumanises the existence of both Dalits, lower castes and women and entitles higher castes to certain 'privileges'. Caste then evokes three aspects namely, repulsion, hierarchy and hereditary specialisation. And this is deduced on the basis of certain visual determinants such as colour, described social stigma, stark poverty, ancestry, outside perception, habits and practises – 'disability' and backwardness are representations that are engaged communally as part of social, legal and political interventions to mitigate the negative effects of the caste system within the Indian State. Various assertions around bodily differentiations and configurations feature as designators of purity or pollution which are not able to be overcome. Caste as an ableist practise of ranking and differentiation produces boundary adherence and is only possible through the use of power and coercion to enforce these divisions and demarcations (Chakravarti, 2018).

Scientific Racism a Cloak of Ableism?

The introduction of the infamous 1935 Nuremburg laws of the German Reich bought together the racialised caste 'Jewishness' as well as genetic genealogy (Volkov, 1986). Robertson, Ley and Light (2019) draw attention to the *Krankenmorde*, the event of the systematic murder of 2,16,000 people with physical, mental and emotional disabilities. They note that in eugenics discourses, ableism and racism were kindred bedfellows during the middle of the 20th century. Indeed, Nazi persecution on the grounds of race, disability and (homo)sexism were enabled by the regime's creation of categories of biological otherness. The Nazi's used scientific discourses or metaphors such as cancer, infection or genetic impurity to position and describe such biological Others as threats resulting in the creation of the concept of a master race (Plant, 1986; Robertson, Ley and Light, 2019, 159; Volkov, 2006).

Ableism creates whole pools of people saturated by lower expectations or are viewed as 'characterologically suspect' and of lower intelligence. A similar version of Indian racialist ideology can be found in the Hindutva movement which contains strains of racialised intelligence discourses in monolithic cultural and racial terms. Hindutva, is, an essentialist approach to Hinduism that is based on a political and social programme of militant fascist communal Hindu organizations with the aim of establishing a *Hindu Rashtra*. As Teltumbde, puts it, "Hindutva thus pretends to abolish every kind of difference, notably caste, and appears to reassure the Dalits that they would no longer be Dalits if they donned Hindutva" (Teltumbde, 2020, 25).

In the west, there is an older history that shattered the idea of the fundamental equality of human beings. Saini (2018, 29) argues that it was the 'discovery' of the continent of Australia by white folk that helped shatter the Enlightenment belief in the idea of human unity and common capabilities. Here there is the emergence of the idea of comparison.

The benchmark reference point of this idea was being the able bodied white European human subject from which to ascertain other 'human' comparisons. Today's version of exponents of scientific racism term themselves, 'race realists'. Instead of classic racial markers, these racial realists manipulate language by using terms such as human variation, populations, ethnicity, and human biodiversity. According to Saini (2019, 136) these protagonists argue that quite different ethnicities should be encouraged to do what they do best, every person in a diverse society has a place, it is just not the same place. Here we have ranking and differentiating practises being normalised in the form of language that appears to come out of an equality paradigm. I want to move onto the re-emergence, of eugenics discourses around ableism during this time of COVID-19. Saini (2019) provides a useful definition of eugenics in an updated fashion:

> eugenics is a cold, calculated way of thinking about human life, reducing human beings to nothing but parts of the whole. It also assumes that almost all that we are is decided before we are born.
>
> Saini (2019, 71)

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, we are witnessing the return of soft eugenics as well as the legitimisation of scientific racism to bolster nationalist politics (Saini, 2019). Coupled with the rise of popular genetic genealogy members of the public are seduced by technologies to determine our 'origin', we see an emerging strain of genetic determinism in the public imagination. The current discussions around COVID-19 bring together discourses around disability and race in close proximity. There have been attempts in some countries to have COVID-19 legislation trump or at least suspend existing human rights legislative protections. The point of the prong of 'Notification' is not an exercise in disagreeing with the importance of data collection and enumeration; rather it points to the locus of control. That locus in the contemporary field and historically has always been in the hands of ableist clinicians and professionals with the support of legal regulation, who under the guise of professionalism and scientism, have had limited transparency for decision making and accountability, and when this does occur, it is long after the fact.

In summary, we need to be vigilant about the rise of eugenics and its normalisation. Saini (2019) points to the fact that governments continue to use racial categories such as those in census forms which do not necessarily map the true picture of human variation. This disconnection in categories and peoples' lived experiences also extends to the classification of 'disabilities' and holding onto diagnosticism to frame experiences of disablement. In fact, the debates over which groups are at risk for COVID-19 are very telling. We find scientists routinely using racial/ disability and clinical categories that are not only familiar to them, but to the public – yet in many ways, scientists are enveloped by the very categories that they use. As researchers and activists, we need to be mindful about examining the conditions of ableist relations and look to who benefits and who loses out. Ableism is a constantly shifting landscape with racial realists reappearing on the scene in the membership of advisory boards of both sociological, psychological and scientific peer reviewed journals (this includes academics from both China and India promoting narratives of superior DNA intelligence).

When we examine ableist practises and processes in order to develop interventions to change those practises, we should look at those conditions in terms of how (a) they originate; (b) their source; (c) their processes of generation; (d) how those conditions are nourished, and (e) how conditions act foundationally upon society (Campbell, 2019). Ableist systems attack minoritised peoples whether that be disabled people, black and brown people, religious minorities and others, and engage in practices of humiliation that dehumanise and ultimately animalise human beings.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has exposed a nasty, virulent, underbelly of hostile attitudes towards minoritised peoples. With COVID-19, the concealed has become revealed in the playing out of various government promulgations and media portrayals about disabled people, people of colour, migrant workers, displaced persons and ideas of boundaries, borders and nationhood. We see the return of speech acts that characterise people in terms of vermin, leeches, and burdens on the State. This combined with the rise of right-wing attempts to reconfigure who are the People, and therefore by way of inversion, who are the excluded, the redundant, the dispensable. I now turn to those aspects of the Indian tradition that require in-depth research explorations at the conceptual and practice levels to better understand particularised practices and processes of ableism and develop cognitive theoretical alternatives.

Contributory Movements – Transformative Approaches?

Given India's has an appalling record of social asymmetry, it would be useful to survey, albeit briefly, Indian's foundational ideas about equality drawn from political theory and Indian philosophies, at least in terms of showcasing aspirational commitments. I undertake this task first by considering India's tradition of heterodoxy, especially concerning argumentation, and then examine some perspectives from classical philosophy.

Heterodox Argumentation

Before considering heterodoxy in argumentation, it is worth noting Indian philosophies' propensity towards investing in classificatory practises. The word *jati* for instance refers to many kinds of things besides caste classifications, quoting Ganguly (2005):

> … it refers to all sorts of categories of things – sets of colours and sound, for example: it includes living creatures generated from seeds, from moisture, from eggs, and from wombs. *Jati* means a whole range of earthly population that we call families, kin groups, genders, occupational categories, speakers of the same language, regional populations, religious communities, nations, races; it encompasses the categories of gods in their heavens.

Ganguly, (2005, 3-4, cited in Ramanujam, 2020, 10)

Hence, *jati* denotes a whole series of dividing practices and the differentiation of those categories define the world views that constructed those categories. The result is a system of highly attuned categorical thinking. Indian philosophy treats 'truth' within an epistemological context, and different theories of truth are associated with divergent theories of knowledge. Truth is regarded as a property of cognitions, not as in the west, of sentences or propositions. Although it is presupposed that a true cognition, if appropriately verbalised, would be expressed by a true statement. Hinduism generally, and Indian philosophy particularly, contains and embraces many dissenting voices and heterodox opinions (Ganeri, 2020, 38).

Unlike a two-cornered form of argumentation found in the West, the Jaina (non-orthodox school) seven-valued logic is a paradigmatic formulation that proposes that contradictions can be defused by discovering a hidden parameterisation in their statements. Cognitions form dispositions, but the concept of a disposition is not in the forefront in classical Indian analytics as in accounts of dialectic and argumentation found in the *Kathāvatthu*, the *Nyāyasūtra*, or the *Vādavinoda*. The orthodox schools of Indian philosophy contain systems, or *darshanas*, for debate. These debates contain penetrating insights, often with a degree of repetition, about such issues as the status of the finite individual, or the distinction as well as the relations between the body, mind and the self; the nature knowledge and the types of valid knowledge, the nature and origin of truth and the types of entities that may be said to exist. The Jaina seven-valued logic is a system of argumentation developed by Jain philosophers to support and substantiate their theory of pluralism. This argumentation system has seven distinct semantic predicates which may be thought of as seven different truth values (Kumar, 1984; Ganeri, 2001, 2002).

In the *Nyāyasūtra*, there is a systematic discussion of the multiple ways in which an opinion or principle might count as 'settled' – *siddhānta*. A view might be 'settled' due to general consensus, which is understood as a situation in which the view or perspective is accepted by some parties, including oneself, and lacking any outright rejection. The construction of these conceptual categories could help in understanding the reality of Indian society as it exists today (Singhi, 1987, 6). As Ganeri (2020, 38), exclaims in terms of current challenges around the role and place of secularism is Indian society: "One needs to show how Hinduism has within itself models of rational deliberation that make possible the dissenting voices and internal critiques and how those models also make available to Hindus a conception of what it is to reason about the public good". I now turn to a selection of integrative ethics. Heterodoxical thinking is emblematic of philosophical approaches.

An Integrative Ethos?

Outlining the common characteristic belief systems of Indian Philosophical schools with the exception of the materialist school; Ramakrishna Puligandla (2008, 11) argues that these schools in respect of an integrative or 'equalities' ethos, believe that (1) No account of reality which fails to do justice to reason and experience can be accepted; (2) Every acceptable philosophy should aid humankind in realising the *puruṣārthas* (the chief ends of life). Indeed, all philosophies of India are philosophies of life and that (3) All systems hold that there is no limit to the perfectibility of humankind (humans are capable of continuous improvement), as we are all infinitely perfectible, and finally, (4)All schools argue that complete freedom is to be obtained here and now in the *bodily* existence. This perspective is supported by the four categories or groups that one ought to equalise as designated in the *Mahābhārata* (MB XII.142.11). These are 1. myself (*ātman*), 2. those who please me, in other words, my friends and family (*iṣta*), 3. those who do not please me (*aniṣta*), and 4. those I hate, in other words, my enemies (*ripu*).

Dalmiya (2018, 159) notes that these four groups of equalities promote a self-conscious and cultivated practise of equality. These ethical dimensions are suggestive of possibilities for exploring trends of thinking that could be considered as counter-ableist. Echoing this Integrative ethos**,** Sen (2005) suggests that India is typified by the sentiment expressed in the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*:

> Since members of all forecasts are children of God, they all belong to the same caste. All human beings have the same father, and children of the same father cannot have different castes.
>
> (cited in Sen, 2005,11)

Sen argues that pluralist toleration pivots around the Sanskrit word *swīkriti*, in the sense of 'acceptance'; Sen argues that *swīkriti* is concerned with the "acknowledgment that the people involved are entitled to lead their own lives. The idea of *swīkriti* need not, of course, convey any affirmation of equality of the standing of one 'accepted' group compared with another. Acceptance, in this elementary sense, might not seem like much, but the political value of pluralism has much to do with acceptance that indeed is the domain in which this *swīkriti* delivers a lot" (Sen 2005, 35). This pluralist tolerance is somewhat pragmatic, recognising the compulsions and constraints of Indian politics and geographies. As Khilnami puts it:

> Indians, no more than their counterparts anywhere else, are not virtuous, moderate, principled or even especially tolerant people: they are deeply self-interested. But it is that self-interest – so apparent in the conduct of the political elite - which encourages them to make compromises and accommodations
>
> (Khilnani, 2003, xiii)

Such an orientation towards equality is amplified further in the metaphysics of the *Advaita Vedānta* which argues all humans are inherently one, as the same atman (soul) resides in all people, "… then there is essentially no difference between me and my neighbour. Both are one and the same person" (Tiwari. 2017, xxv). From this, Tiwari deduces that "the essence of man [sic] is spirit or soul. In the nature of this spirit, all men [sic] are one, at least essentially" (Tiwari, 2017, xxiii). The National poet and political activist Rabindranath Tagore stated that the 'idea of India' itself militates 'against the intense consciousness of the separateness of one's own people from others'. (Tagore, cited in Sen, 2005, 349). The recent political turmoil in India would appear to contradict Tagore's perspective of an integrative message – in the idea of 'Indian' identity.

Nonetheless, a counterpoint to the caste system articulated in the *Manav Dharmasastra*, the intellectual traditions within the various school of Indian philosophy suggest some measure of 'equalisation' amongst persons. Social morality involves a degree of self-sacrifice is the first condition of social morality on the part of the adherent. Indeed, morality on the individual plane, precedes social morality. Interaction with the unfamiliar or repugnant demands than the first impulse should not be revulsion, rather the controlling the senses. Indian ethics then promotes *Indrīyanigraha* (control of senses); *Anasakti* (non-attraction towards objects) and *Niskāmatā* (control of desires) (Tiwari, 2017, xviii). Unlike western systems of ethics which sees morality arising in social contexts, the Indian metaphysical system on ethics is based on *duty*, obligation and virtue. As Tiwari (2017) articulates:

> … The whole Indian ethical system is deontological. Something is *dharma* (duty, obligation or virtue) simply because it is a Vedic law or it is prescribed by *Dharma Sūtras* and *Śāstras*. This seems to be the temperament of the entire Indian system taken in general.
>
> Tiwari (2017, 118)

A distinctly 'Indian' ableism studies research should be mindful of the pitfalls of reductionism, that is reducing synergies, similarities and generalisable claims to their lowest common denominator. We need to orientate our research to explore genealogies of knowledges and practices that include continuities as well as discontinuities within and across particularised spaces. Indian philosophy itself has a long-standing system of heterodoxy of thought, including scepticism, and simultaneous truth articulation which does not need to be made coherent and these contexts, can frame research relations in ableism studies.

Concluding Thoughts

One of the challenges in undertaking disability and ableism studies research is to circumvent monolithic thinking at the level of ideas, region and also country. All is not as it might seem, in terms of inter-communal interaction with people viewed as different, for instance the operation of *lajja bhayya* (fear-shame) – what will people think of us – which often forms the backdrop of interactions and behaviours in encounters with 'strangers' and 'outsiders' who might compromise purity.

What I have attempted to undertake in this article is a problematisation of 'Indianness' and what that would mean for 'area' focused research. I have outlined some of challenges in developing disability and ableism studies and the appreciation of the endurance of the 'captive mind'. Key to the article is the treatment of the idea of ableism, formulative errors and the vexed issue of identity politics. A focal concern is the system of caste relations and scientific racism and how they might intersect with the insights of Studies in Ableism. In the final section of the article, I turned to distinct possibilities within Indian traditions that may offer different insights into the study of dehumanised human difference.

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Violence and Abuse through an Ability Studies Lens

Gregor Wolbring

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses violence and abuse through an ability studies lens. Ability studies investigates the social, cultural, legal, political, ethical and other considerations by which any given ability expectations (it would be nice to have certain abilities) and ableism – the more severe form of ability expectation (certain abilities are seen as absolutely essential) hierarchies and preferences – come to pass, and the impact of such hierarchies and preferences. This paper pays homage to the work done by disabled activists and the academic field of disability studies on ableism but expands on the concept of ableism in various ways such as broadening it beyond disabled people to decrease the otherism disabled people experience. It also engages with the enabling use of ableism to make the concept more useful. We provide two tools, the BIAS FREE (Building an Integrative Analytical System For Recognizing and Eliminating in Equities) framework, a tool for identifying biases that originate from social hierarchies including ability-based social hierarchies and ability expectation exercises. Both these tools can be used with everyone such as students to unravel unrecognized, hidden or blatant AAs (Ability expectation and Ableism) and disablisms and enablisms linked to them. The paper concludes with a better and more systematic AA governance discourse, a mapping out of AA conflicts and a much bigger community of practice on AA governance.

1.0 Introduction

Ability studies (short for ability expectation and ableism studies) investigates how ability expectations (it would be nice to have certain abilities) and ableism the more severe form of ability expectation (certain abilities are seen as absolutely essential) hierarchies and preferences come to pass. Ability studies furthermore investigates the complexity and impact of such hierarchies and preferences (2008b, 2008c). It is based on the concept of ableism coined by the disabled people's rights movement during the 1960s and 1970s in order to question how body ability expectation norms are generated, the "ability privileges (i.e. ability to work, to gain education, to be part of society, to have a positive identity, to be seen a citizen)" that come with an ability normative body and the disablism, the ability expectation and ableism oppression, the negative treatment, experienced by disabled people because they were judged as being "ability-deficient" (Miller et al., 2004); (for many examples of academic work on ableism I am indebted to (Wolbring, 2020b). However, my engagement with ability expectations and ableism (AA) goes beyond its initial scope.

First, my premise is that AA is a cultural reality that goes beyond disabled people and impacts humans–humans relationships in general and humans-animals, humans-nature relationships in particular (Wolbring, 2008b, 2008c; Wolbring, 2013a; Wolbring, 2014a). It starts to play itself out on the intersections of humans-post/transhumans and humans-cyborg humans whereby post-transhuman and cyborg humans are humans with new or improved abilities beyond the species-typical obtained through genetic modifications or wearable and implantable technologies. AA also already plays itself out around humans-non sentient machines relationships (Wolbring, 2006, 2007) given that humans compete with machines such as robots for example in employment. Furthermore, if advancements in artificial intelligence and machine learning achieve what is envisioned, namely that the artificial intelligence becomes sentient, it will impact humans-sentient machines, animals-sentient machines and nature-sentient machines relationships (Wolbring, 2019) as well.

Secondly, AA is not only used to define a person but also to define social entities from small groups to nations and influences how social groups and nations interact (Wolbring, 2019).

Third, according to me AA means that one likes certain abilities like driving a car, using public transportation, having a decent life, living in an equitable society, having power. AA by itself is a desire one has as an individual or as social entities such as nations. What one does with the ability desire is where the consequences come into play. One can use AA to disable (disablism) and enable (enablism) (Wolbring & Yumakulov, 2015).

The disabling (disablism) use of AA was the focus of the initial use of the term ableism in relation to disabled people. However, the disabling use of AA is also applied against other social and biological entities. For example men as a social group decided that the ability of rationality is important, decided that women are not rational, and used and still use this AA to disable women by telling them that they cannot do certain things because they are not rational (Cornia, 1997; Daily Star, 2014; Goldberg, 1968; Oakley & Roberts, 1981; Toffel, 1996; Wolbring, 2019; Wolbring & Diep, 2016). AA are used in disabling ways to justify many negative isms such as racism, sexism, caste-ism, ageism, speciesism, and anti-Environmentalism (Wolbring, 2008c).

As to the enabling (enablism) use of AA there are many examples (see section 6). To experience positive and negative peace for example could be seen as a positive AA (Wolbring, 2013c, 2014b, 2019; Wolbring et al., 2020).

However, the relationship between disabling and enabling is very complex (more in section 6). Often the disabling use against some is done to enable others, such as the use of the AA of rationality to disable women, workers (Posusney, 1993) and others (Osborne, 2013; van Montagu, 2013) is done to enable men and the ones in conflict with workers and others. The question is who has the power to push their AA and what is their purpose behind pushing for certain abilities versus other abilities.

Ability Studies can make use of many different social theories. Furthermore, there are many ability related concepts in ability studies such as ability security (short for AA security), ability identity and self-identity security (short for AA identity and aa self-identity security), ability expectation oppression, ability privilege, ability discrimination, ability inequity, ability inequality or ability expectation creep (Wolbring, 2010a, 2014a, 2017c, 2020a; Wolbring & Ghai, 2015). I will make use of these ability focused concepts in the remainder of the paper.

Violence and abuse are two major societal realities defining how social and biological entities relate and interact. Violence and abuse greatly impact disabled people and other social and biological entities. AA are one factor that influences (enables or disables) violence and abuse.

The remainder of the paper looks at violence (which includes abuse) through an ability studies lens with a particular focus on ability identity abuse (section 2); structural violence with a particular focus on human security and ability security (section 3); ability expectation creep (expecting constantly new or improvement on old AA (section 4); eco-ableism (humans-nature, humans-animal relationships) (section 5); enabling use of AA (section 6); two tools to engage with AA namely BIAS FREE (Building an Integrative Analytical System For Recognizing and Eliminating in Equities) framework (Eichler & Burke, 2006a, 2006b), a tool for identifying biases that derive from social hierarchies and AA exercises (section 7) and conclusion (section 8).

2.0 Violence including abuse through an ability studies lens

Sexual abuse, related to disabled women in general and disabled males in institutions (disabled people, male and female, being committed to institutions, is still quite common in many countries) is equal to or higher than those related to non-disabled women. Along with abuse, violence such as police violence against disabled people is also high (Disability Without Abuse Project, 2020; Hansen et al.; Mansell & Sobsey, 1994; Mansell et al., 1992; Maqbool, 2018; Rudman Family foundation, 2016, 2019; D. Sobsey, 1994; Sobsey, 1995; Sobsey & Doe, 1991; R. Sobsey, 1994).

The 'Disability Without Abuse' project is a recent effort to increase the visibility of the violence and abuse against disabled people[1]. The project aims to become a repository of knowledge and a place for exchange of views and plans for action.

Violence as a concept is undertheorized in ability studies even though one can make a case that the disabling use of AA is one main factor in the use and justification of violence. Furthermore, AA language is not used to identify AA that can affect a decrease in violence and abuse.

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[1] Violence and abuse against disabled people is evident in every country, for India-specific issues, see (Daruwalla et al., 2013; Dawn, 2014; Nayar & Mehrotra, 2016).

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as: "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (World Health Organization, 2002, p. 5) whereby this definition includes acts that result from "a power relationship, including threats, intimidation, neglect and acts of omission" (World Health Organization, 2002, p. 5) and the violent act can be "physical, sexual, psychological, and involve deprivation or neglect" (World Health Organization, 2002, p. 6).

Many groups experience all of the various kinds of violence covered by the WHO report. This includes disabled people (albeit the report did not really cover disabled people) (Disability Without Abuse Project, 2020; Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011).

Violence, when seen through the lens of ability studies can be caused in two main ways:

> 1) Active or intentional disablism: One actively tries to generate social conditions that disable the one without the ability or where one generates new ability expectations with the expressed purpose to generate a hierarchy between social groups with one being the dominant one. So, the primary purpose is to disable one based on the difference in abilities (perceived or real).
>
> 2) Omission or passive or unintentional disablism: One disables someone else by not accommodating the other individual or social group that does not exhibit the ability. This could be due to a lack of awareness or not thinking about it. The primary purpose is not to generate the disablement due to ability differences (perceived or real) but it is a side effect of not thinking, not being aware of the consequences of one's AA (Wolbring, 2020a).

The AA of dominating others, the AA of having power over others is at play in all aspects of the WHO description and is an obvious example of active, intentional disablism.

One can describe the violence outlined using various ability studies concepts, for example, many of the descriptions are facilitated by the exhibition of ability privilege. "Ability privilege describes the advantages enjoyed by those who exhibit certain abilities and the unwillingness of these individuals to relinquish the advantage linked to the abilities especially with the reason that these are earned or birth given (natural) abilities" (Wolbring, 2014a, 2020a). Violence and abuse generated by active disablism conceptualized within this meaning of ability privilege suggests that people with expected, normative body abilities are not willing to give up their ability privileges (Wolbring, 2014a, 2020a). Such form of ability privilege-based violence and abuse is one of the main drivers of violence and abuse disabled people experience.

However, violence and abuse based on ability privilege also plays itself out in relation to other social groups (e.g. race, gender, class) (Wolbring, 2014a, 2020a). Furthermore, "social groups are also formed based on ability privileges whereby the social group is defined by whether its members have or don't have a given ability (the ability-have and the ability-non-have social groups)" (Wolbring, 2020a). Ability privilege of the 'haves' can be seen to provoke violence and abuse against the 'non-haves'.

One can use other AA concepts to call out AA violence and abuse. AA apartheid for example means that individuals or social structures deprive other individuals or social structures of a decent life based on the disabling use of AA (Wolbring, 2020a; Wolbring & Ghai, 2015) whereby AA apartheid is one form of social apartheid (Wolbring & Ghai, 2015). AA oppression means that one is being oppressed by AA of others (Wolbring, 2020a; Wolbring & Ghai, 2015).

The WHO continues to describe violence as follows:

> "It includes self-directed violence, violence by other individuals (interpersonal violence) and larger groups such as states, organized and political groups (collective violence)" (World Health Organization, 2002, p. 6) whereby collective violence is subdivided into social, political and economic violence (World Health Organization, 2002, p. 6). "Collective violence that is committed to advance a particular social agenda. Political violence includes war and related violent conflicts, state violence and similar acts carried out by larger groups. The nature of violent acts can be physical, sexual, psychological, and involve deprivation or neglect."
>
> (World Health Organisation, 2002, p. 6).

All these aspects of violence can be described using the ability studies concepts already mentioned.

The WHO on page 13 outlines societal factors supporting violence (World Health Organization, 2002, p. 13). All of them can be linked to some AA, and AA-based reasoning is used in many cases to justify it.

In the next section, I engage with one specific AA aspect of violence and abuse.

2.1. Ability identity abuse and ability identity security

Ability self-identity security/ ability identity security is the security to be able to be at ease with one's abilities and the abilities one wants to make use of (Wolbring, 2010a, 2020a). Ability identity abuse and violence is induced when others negate ability identity security. Often, due to external ability identity abuse, one internalizes such ability identity abuse leading to an ability identity self-abuse. Ability identity abuse is experienced by many disabled people as evident by the pathologization and other negative stereotypical descriptions of the set of abilities disabled people have (Nishida, 2016). One example of ability identity abuse is the attachment of the term "risk" to a group. There are many hits in Google and Google Scholar for the phrase "risk of Down Syndrome" (Wolbring, 2017a) used to 'indicate a danger if one is pregnant at a later age'. The use of the term "risk" is a judgment. The factual term is "probability" which is 4 times less present in Google and 28 times less in Google Scholar (Wolbring, 2017a). Such bias makes positive language such as the following, impossible:

> "Down syndrome is a naturally occurring chromosomal arrangement that has always been a part of the human condition. The occurrence of Down syndrome is universal across racial and gender lines, and it is present in approximately one in 781 births in Canada. Down syndrome is not a disease, disorder, defect, or medical condition. It is inappropriate and offensive to refer to people with Down syndrome as "afflicted with" or "suffering from" it. Down syndrome itself does not require either treatment or prevention."
>
> (Canadian Down Syndrome Society, 2020)

However, ability identity abuse has been experienced historically and is still experienced by various social groups. It is also used to justify an elevated level of rights and status of some people and social groups in relation to other people and social groups, and of humans in relation to other species and nature (Wolbring, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2012c). With focus on the body being defective, as is in the case of disabled people, ability identity abuse, has been and still is used to justify, for example, sexism, by stating that women are deficient. Labelling of women as being unable to be rational therefore being ability deficient, was used to counter the fight of the suffragettes for women's right to vote (Buechler, 1990; Wolbring, 2008c). This claim continues to be made even today to disable women in general. (Daily, 2014; Toffel, 1996; Wolbring & Diep, 2016) The linkage of hysteria to the uterus, which has been used for a long time (Mcculloch, 1969), is another example of ability-based identity abuse of women. As Baynton stated "Disability [as in ability different] has functioned historically to justify inequality for disabled people themselves, but it has also done so for women and minority groups" (Baynton, 2013, p. 33). Racism has been and still is often justified by claiming that the undesired ethnic group is less able cognitively (Wolbring, 2008c), see for example the Bell Curve (Herrnstein, 1994). Negative portrayals linked to being seen as ability deficient are also used against indigenous people (Hutcheon & Lashewicz, 2020; Wolbring & Diep, 2016). Identity abuse is also experienced by the LGBTQ community; an Identity Abuse Scale has also been developed for this purpose (Woulfe & Goodman, 2018). If one digs deep enough, one often finds that such identity abuse is linked to abilities such as gays not being 'male' enough (Gil, 2007), being pathologized (Williamson, 1999) and being seen as morally inferior (Doan et al., 2014; Fish, 2006). Covering any of these could be linked to ability identity abuse

As to ability identity abuse, we not only see marginalized groups experiencing ability identity abuse caused by non-marginalized groups, but we also see different marginalized groups ability identity abusing other marginalized groups.

One example is evident in the discourse that questions the use of sex selection but rejects the questioning of deselection based on 'ability deficiency'. These are some arguments used to justify the prohibition of sex selection:

(i) Sex selection poses significant threats to the well-being of children and siblings, the children's sense of self-worth and the attitude of unconditional acceptance of a new child by parents, so psychologically crucial to parenting.
(ii) Sex selection leads to the oppression of the people with the unwanted sex leading to social injustice.
(iii) Sex selection is a form of sex discrimination.
(iv) Sex selection leads to the enhancement of sex stereotypes which means that people will have certain expectations towards people with one sex or another.
(v) Sex is not a disease.

(Wolbring, 2003)

These arguments make sense to many. Now, if we replace "sex" with "ability" at least arguments (i)-(iv) are just as valid (Wolbring, 2003).

As to point (v) one can also say that lack of a given ability or unwillingness to deploy a given ability is also not a disease as such. However, the battle is around point five and what can be labelled as a disease, disorder or impairment because if one can be labelled as such points (i)-(iv) are seen as not applicable or superseded by point (v) (Wolbring, 2003). An "Animal Farm" philosophy (some are more equal than others) (Wolbring, 2004) exists. Different ethical, moral and other standards are applied for the entities labelled or not labelled as diseased or impaired. This demarcation line is evident in the debates around the boundaries of pre-birth interventions (whether it is deselection based on genetic or other information or somatic gene and other therapy and germline gene therapy). As such any group that does not want to be targeted has to make the case that they are not a disease and also argue whether the disease label can be linked to a non-accepted ability difference that 'their lacking or non-deployed abilities' do not constitute a disease or disorder label. Let us look at the case of the gay gene. The gay genes is searched for because for the longest time in most places and still in some places being homosexual is seen as inferior because being homosexual is equated with a lack of abilities "homosexual sex is not capable of producing offspring, and thus serves no greater social purpose (as opposed to "productive" heterosexual sex)" (Clark, 2006, p. section III). Some of the arguments used to reject the search for a gay gene are similar to the ones used to prohibit sex selection such as "parents to reject the birth of a potential homosexual would reinforce the notion of the inferiority of homosexuals and so enhance prejudice and discrimination" (West, 2001, p. 440).

Given the danger of being attached to a disease/disorder label, the gay community makes the argument that they are not deficient, not a disease to draw a line that excludes them. Consider the following quote in this connection:

> "There is a disanalogy between the argument I have made against the permissibility of orientation-selection procedures and the proposed argument against the permissibility of using genetic technology to prevent the birth of babies with serious disorders. Such disorders may dramatically decrease life expectancy, cause great

> suffering, and intrinsically undermine a person's quality of life; further, a person with such a condition would say that she wishes that she did not have this condition. Homosexuality and bisexuality are not like this; in particular, the primary negative features of being a lesbian, gay man or bisexual have to do with societal attitudes towards these sexual orientations, not with intrinsic features of them"
>
> (Stein, 1998, p. 22).

Of course, what the last sentence says is also what many disabled people say about their ability differences and the ongoing debate about the imagery of a disabled person and the origin of the disablement.

The same non-disease argument is also outlined for transgenders (Hutt, 2018). The literature suggests that being safe is linked to NOT being labelled as a disease, NOT being labelled as having 'ability deficiencies' that are linked to the label disease or disorder.

As such, the battle of who is labelling whom as 'ability deficient' and which 'ability deficiency' constitutes being a disease and disorder is one main cause of ability identity abuse and lack of ability identity security.

Now what abilities are expected and what 'ability deficiencies' are linked to a disease or disorder label is a constantly changing reality. It starts to play itself out around humans-posthumans/ transhumans and humans-cyborg humans relationships with new characteristics being linked to the disease, disorder or impairment label and new forms of ability identity abuse and lack of ability identity security (see further discussion in section 4 covering the topic of ability expectation creep).

That being labelled is the very problem, is also evident in the fact that around disabled people-to-be, prenatal testing is defended so as to allow to prepare the parents early on. If this benefit is so great and not a red herring, why does the gay community not go for the gay gene so that the parents can know early on during pregnancy and can read up on being parents of a gay kid? They don't, because it is a red herring. They know once there is a test and a gene it will be about elimination/ prevention NOT early pre-warning system.

There are many examples of ability identity abuse and lack of ability identity security beyond the pre-birth example outlined above; for example, point 26 of the 2030 Sustainability Development goal main document is a clear example of the ones targeted as not being able to experience ability identity security:

> "We are committed to the prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases, including behavioural, developmental and neurological disorders, which constitute a major challenge for sustainable development (United Nations, 2015).

For sure neurodiversity would not be accepted under point 26. Additionally, as in the USA and Canada, 'learning disability' is defined as a neurological disorder (Wolbring & Yumakulov, 2015), everyone with a learning disability would be a target. It is interesting that up to 2018 the WHO listed transgender under "mental, behavioural and neurodevelopmental disorders" (Agence France-Presse, 2018) so point 26 at that time asked for the elimination of transgender. In 2018 transgender was moved to the category "conditions related to sexual health" (Agence France-Presse, 2018) which to me still sounds like a 'problem'.

Being labelled in a negative way not only comes with elimination consequences but also leads to invisibility in non-medical policy discourses. Comments by disabled people taking part in sustainable development consultations revealed that disabled people are mostly excluded from sustainability policy discussions because their identity is fixed as a deficient one (Participants of the Global Online Discussion on Science Technology and Innovation for SDGs, 2016; Participants of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and UNICEF organized Online Consultation - 8 March - 5 April Disability inclusive development agenda towards 2015 & beyond, 2013; Wolbring et al., 2013). This exclusion might be a deliberate disablism in some cases and an unintended disablism in other cases. As to the unintended disablism, it might simply not occur to someone that disabled people are impacted and need to be involved in certain policy discussions because of the medical imagery of disabled people in the person's mind.

In case of the intended disablism, labelling a group or person as ability deficient, was and is a mechanism to justify the exclusion or discrediting of groups, persons or entire activist movements from policy discussions (Wolbring, 2019).

One consequence of pervasive ability identity abuse is that individuals internalise the ability oppression that ability identity abuse causes. Internalising one's oppression (Akbar, 1984) is for example recognized in relation to internalized ableism (Campbell, 2008)(used with a focus on disabled people), classism (Russell, 1996), internalized sexism and heterosexism (Bearman et al., 2009; Szymanski, 2005) and internalized racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Harper, 2007; Hipolito-Delgado, 2010; Pyke & Dang, 2003). Internalising ability oppression and ability identity abuse is one factor in accepting the negative treatments one is a target of (racism, sexism, casteism, etc.). For example, during the fight for women's voting rights many women believed that women do not have the abilities needed to vote (being rational, etc.).

3.0 Structural violence through an ability studies lens

> "Structural violence is a term commonly ascribed to Johan Galtung, which he introduced in the article "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research" (1969). It refers to a form of violence wherein some social structure or social institution may harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs. Institutionalized adultism, ageism, classism, elitism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, speciesism, racism, and sexism are some examples of structural violence as proposed by Galtung".[2]

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[2] *Structural Violence* entry in Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Structural_violence. Retrieved August 11, 2020 (John Galtung referred in Wikipedia).

This quote right away indicates the need for an ability studies lens. That ableism and disablism are not listed as "isms" in the list highlights the problem of silo-ism which is one reason why I expanded the concept of ableism. It is obvious that many of these "isms" are based on ability expectations and are covered by the scope of ability studies as outlined before.

Structural violence is "the avoidable disparity between the potential ability to fulfil basic needs and their actual fulfilment" (Ho, 2007, p. 1). In other words, there is a gap in AA and their fulfilments. According to Ho "inequality, prima facie, betrays the fact that an unrealized fundamental human need is avoidable. It also establishes a certain level of what constitutes the potential by comparing it to what others can achieve" (Ho, 2007, p. 4). One can phrase inequity and inequality in AA language whereby for both, ability inequity (an unjust or unfair distribution, right or wrong) and ability inequality (any uneven distribution), two subgroups exist. One group is linked to judgment of abilities of biological structures such as the human body (e.g. walking, flying) (group 1) and the other group is linked to access to and protection from abilities generated through human interventions that impact humans (e.g. education, employment, food security, clean water weapons, building things) (group 2) (Wolbring, 2010a, 2020a). Both groups support structural violence and are experienced by disabled people and others.

Both groups of definitions highlight numerous potentials for ability identity abuse and structural violence based on AA.

> "Structural violence illuminates the causal relationship between power differentials in structures" (Ho, 2007, pp. 8-9). The examples around ability identity abuse highlight power differentials as to who decides what is a disease. "Structural violence is generally invisible because it is part of the routine grounds of everyday life" (Ho, 2007, p. 9). Many if not all the examples in this paper of AA related violence and abuse could fit this statement.

Finally, to finish this section on a positive an enabling use of AA, we can reword the language around peace and structural violence using AA language.

Johan Galtung in 1969[3] defined negative peace as the absence of personal violence and positive peace as the absence of structural violence (Wolbring et al., 2020). In other words, negative peace is the ability to experience the absence of personal violence and positive peace is the ability to experience the absence of structural violence. According to Barash and Webel (2014), positive peace is the presence of desirable notions within society such as harmony, justice, equality and equity (Wolbring et al., 2020). In other words, it is about the positive ability expectation to experience harmony, justice, equality and equity.

3.1. Human Security and Ability Security

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[3] See note 2.

The concept of human security has been debated for some time (Brauch, 2009). It is seen as essential for all humans (Commission on Human Security, 2003). The Commission on Human Security defined human security as follows: "to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment" (Commission on Human Security, 2003, p. 4). The seven human security dimensions outlined in the 1994 human development report were: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political (United Nations Development Programme, 1994, pp. 24-25). The 1994 report further states that "Human security can be said to have two main aspects. It means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life-whether in homes, in jobs or in communities" (United Nations Development Programme, 1994, p. 25). Structural violence is discussed in relation to human security (Schnabel, 2008).

Given the human security literature, it is clear that many of the human insecurities people face can be linked to the disabling use of AA. Furthermore, one should add ability security (the security to have a decent life with one's set of abilities) and ability identity security as essential aspects of human security in general, especially under personal security (Wolbring, 2010a, 2014b, 2020a). It is obvious from the above write up on ability identity security and ability identity abuse that one cannot experience human security in general and personal security in particular if one cannot experience ability identity security and if one is a target for ability identity abuse.

Let us expand now on the concept of ability security.

Job security is an important aspect of human security and job insecurity is seen as one form of structural violence (Fryer & McCormack, 2012; Schwebel, 1997). Disabled people have been experiencing ability insecurity for a long-time in many areas but especially in the area of employment. For example, a 1906 New York Times article stated that in 1900, 20% of blind people had a gainful occupation and 38.5% of deaf people. The same number for non-disabled people was 50.2% (New York Times, 1909). If one looks at the July 2019 US labour force participation rate among non-institutionalized civilians aged 16 years and over, the rate was 20.8% for disabled people and 69.2% for non-disabled people (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). According to the United Nations Enable webpage, 80% to 90% of working age persons with disabilities are unemployed in developing countries, whereas in industrialized countries the figure is between 50% and 70% (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Disability, 2015).

However, lack of ability security in, for example, employment, is also discussed and experienced by non-disabled people. Indeed, the impact of automatization, robotics and artificial intelligence on the ability security aspect of being employed has recently intensified (for many references see (Wolbring, 2016)). What is problematic is that my study from 2016 could not find a single academic article or Canadian newspaper article that discussed the negative impact of robotics on disabled people (Wolbring, 2016). Furthermore, a more recent study from my research group found no content in the academic literature and Canadian newspapers related to the negative effects of artificial intelligence/ machine learning (AI/ ML) use by society on disabled people; of autonomous AI/ ML on disabled people; of AI/ ML causing social problems for disabled people (beyond the need to access AI/ ML related technologies or processes) (Lillywhite & Wolbring, 2020). Moreover, the coverage was purely techno-optimistic (Lillywhite & Wolbring, 2020). Such one-sided coverage of disabled people could be seen as a form of structural violence and one that decreases ability identity security.

4.0 The issue of ability expectation and ableism (AA) creep

Examples under ability identity abuse and what is defined as disease and ability security indicate that AA judgments are not static and that they change constantly. Expecting constantly new abilities or improvement on old abilities (ability expectation and ableism (AA) creep) (Wolbring, 2020a; Wolbring & Yumakulov, 2015) is a cultural reality. The appearance of the term "learning disability" in North America (Wolbring & Yumakulov, 2015) is one example of such an AA creep with the attached othering of the ones judged newly as 'ability deficient'. The term "learning disability" did not exist till 1963 in North America. One can make the case that the term appeared because ability requirements in schools changed in the beginning of the 1960's whereby many students could not fulfil the new requirements (Sleeter, 1986, 1987; Wolbring & Yumakulov, 2015). Learning disability was coined with a neurological deficiency meaning (Kirk, 1968; Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 1981) and at that time was used for students who did not already have a label. There are many examples of AA creeps or total change in AA which are expected from the species-typical (a hunter-gatherer society has different ability expectations from its species-typical members than an agrarian society, a knowledge society and a post-knowledge society (Wolbring & Yumakulov, 2015)).

One emerging area of AA creep which will increasingly impact humans is the enhancement (cyborg or genetics) of humans beyond the species typical. This AA creep and the relationship between human-posthuman/ human-cyborg humans can be nicely analysed through an ability studies lens. Indeed, the emerging human-posthuman/ human-cyborg human relationships are already exhibiting the same ability identity abuse, lack of ability security, ability privilege, ability oppression, ability apartheid, ability inequity and ability inequality issues described for the human-human relationships. Within these relationships the so far species-typical now become the sub species-typical and the enhanced (post/trans humans and cyborg humans) become the new species-typical humans. With these relationships, the very meaning of disease changes with the non-enhanced beyond the old species typical now being classified as diseased (Wolbring, 2005, 2006, 2008c, 2012b); see also (Ball & Wolbring, 2014; Djebrouni & Wolbring, 2020; Fixed the Movie production company, 2020; Goodley et al., 2014; Jotterand, 2008; Miah, 2008; Racine & Forlini, 2010; UK House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, 2007; Williams, 2006; Wolbring, 2010b, 2013a;

Wolbring & Diep, 2016; Wolbring & Ghai, 2015; Wolbring et al., 2014) for some impact of the enhancement debate.

Enhancements are linked to societal AA such as productivity, efficiency or GDP (Goodley & Lawthom, 2019; Goodley et al., 2014; Wolbring, 2008c). A 2006 report outlined the following drivers for human enhancement technologies which are all AA: one's perceived social status; one's competitive advantage; market pressures; global competitiveness and quality of life/ consumer life-style demands (Williams, 2006). Many disabled people will go for enhancements beyond the species-typical if offered (Wolbring, 2013b) and indeed the promoters of enhancements bank on it (Wolbring, 2006). If one cannot have a good life being who one is (lacking ability security and ability identity security) and one lives in a constant state of ability oppression it seems logical that one buys into the offered solution of enhancement beyond the species typical.

5.0 Eco-ableism: humans-nature and humans-animal relationships through an ability studies lens)

Environmental issues and human animal relationships have been debated for a long time. The concept of "structural violence" is linked to how humans deal with nature (Conradie, 2014; Mami, 2012). Linking it to environmental injustice (Morales Jr et al., 2012). Schmitz et al. (2012) state, "The Brundtland Commission, formally the World Commission on Environment and Development, established by the United Nations in 1983, links peace, security, development and the environment claiming that war, poverty and structural violence result in the oppression and degradation of the human community as well as the physical environment". Brantmeier (2013) links the social sustainability with the need to deal with structural and cultural violence.

Ability studies allows us to investigate eco-ability expectations and eco-ableism that impact human-animal and human-environment relationships. Eco-ableism is a conceptual framework for analysing enabling and disabling human ability desires, a class of desires that shape the relationship between humans and animals and humans and their environment (Wolbring, 2012a; Wolbring, 2013a; Wolbring & Lisitza, 2017). Different environment focused movement such as the Shallow ecology movement, the Deep ecology movement and Eco-feminism exhibit different ability expectations at the intersection of humans and nature (Wolbring, 2013a). For example, rephrasing words as outlined by (Besthorn & McMillen, 2002) into ability expectation language results into the following:

> "ecological feminism is rejecting the ability expectation of 'dominance, competition, materialism, and technoscientific exploitation inherent in modernist, competition-based social systems' (Besthorn & McMillen, 2002, p. 226) and nourishing the ability expectation of 'caring and compassion and the creation and nurturing of life' (Besthorn & McMillen, 2002, p. 226)"

(Wolbring, 2013a).

How the relationship between humans and nature is discussed, impacts disabled people. For example, Desmond Tutu sees the climate change discussions exhibiting an adaptation apartheid (Tutu, 2007), meaning, that we expect certain groups to adapt their abilities so that others can live out their existing abilities (e.g. ability to consume). Such adaptation apartheid also impacts how disabled people must adapt to the climate change discussions (Wolbring, 2009). Elsewhere it is brought notice that one main avenue for environmental activism is to decrease "environmental degradation" and "environmental toxins" using the negative imagery of 'disability such as autism' to make its argument (Wolbring, 2013a). As such the environmental health discourse exhibits ability identity abuse towards many disabled people. Looking at social sustainability through the ability studies lens highlights that the very discourse of social sustainability exhibits numerous problems for disabled people (Wolbring & Rybchinski, 2013) which could be classified as structural and cultural violence. Indeed, there is an active eco-ability community covering disabled people with relation to nature (Bentley et al., 2017; Eco-ability facebook group members[4]; Nocella II, 2017; Nocella II et al., 2012) unravelling many of the structural and cultural violence.

But there are other problems with the environmental discourses if looked at through an ability studies lens. Some called out ability privileges inherent in these discussions such as that of the AA of green consumption is exhibiting race and class privilege assumptions (Mengel, 2012). Interestingly, ability-based language is not used to critique the privilege of being able to fulfil the AA of green consumption (Wolbring, 2014a). It is not really race and class but the abilities they have or not have (do they have the ability to afford expensive food, given that many already experience food insecurity?). And if it is about the abilities, then there are others not covered under race and class that do not have this ability.

As to human-animal relationships, this relationship has also been debated for a long time (see vegan discussions, animal liberation discussions or discussions around in-vitro-meat). AA are central to these discussions in general (for example which abilities does one use to rank certain animals over other animals) and also in relation to disabled people (Wolbring, 2014a). In the worthiness hierarchy, certain abilities were put forward to move animals fulfilling these AA ahead of certain disabled humans seen as not fulfilling these AA (Singer, 2016).

6.0 Moving beyond the disabling use of AA: Enabling use of AA

Another important aspect of AA is that it can also be enabling for some (Wolbring & Yumakulov, 2015). To be able to live in peace could be seen as a positive ability expectation (Wolbring, 2014b). Indigenous people's relationship with nature is seen as an example of

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[4] Eco-ability facebook group members, Eco-ability: Animal, Earth and Disability Liberation. https://www.facebook.com/groups/ecoability/ (Retrieved August 11, 2020).

positive AA humans have of nature (Colchester, 1994; Hinch, 1998). Ho mentioned the capability approach (Human Development and Capability Association, 2010) as one initiative to decrease structural violence (Ho, 2007). The capability approach focuses on peoples' abilities to do and ability to be and also includes the ability to act, the opportunity to act upon something (Wolbring, 2011; Wolbring & Burke, 2013). Indeed, the members of the capability discourse have developed lists of capabilities (Alkire & Black, 1997; Nussbaum, 2000) which are lists of ability expectations one should be able to act upon (Wolbring, 2011; Wolbring & Burke, 2013). A social policy frame is used to identify "certain abilities as essential that people should have the right to act on, and so exhibits certain forms of ableisms" (Wolbring, 2011, p. 4). The creation of the concept of sustainable development is seen by many as enabling a more positive ability expectation narrative between humans and nature, although many think it does not go far enough (Wolbring, 2013a; Wolbring, 2014a; Wolbring & Burke, 2013; Wolbring & Yumakulov, 2015). The ability to experience equity/equality is another AA that some see as a positive.

However, once we also look at the enabling aspect, the complexity of AA becomes even more evident. Enabling use of AA often disables others. So, AA pits groups and individuals against each other. Which AA are important for whom? AA important within one cultural setting are not important in another setting. As such ability studies allows for the investigation of cultural aspects of AA which is very important in a time of global interconnectivity. Numerous authors cover the linkage between globalization and structural violence (Bucher, 2004; Padilla et al., 2007; Srikantia, 2016). The four bioethics principles of AA (autonomy, justice, beneficence, and non-maleficence) (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001) are all up for interpretation. At this moment, we see many AA conflicts around environmental issues. Many of these AA are put forward to enable human nature relationships or to enable nature as its own entity independent of humans (Wolbring, 2011). However, the fact that it will disable others is something often not thought through. The same can be said about the discourses around human enhancement and artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics and automatizations. They change the AA landscape and we do not have a good enough leverage yet to deal with the disabling use (intended or unintended) of something sold as enabling. Ability studies is a useful lens to map out the AA, spelling out who wants which AA, who benefits from which AA and other aspects. We also need AA governance and AA conflict resolutions which really is underdeveloped. If we look at the situation in many countries it seems AA conflicts between groups and individuals is on the rise with no AA conflict resolutions in sight.

7.0 Tools to engage with AA

Tools are needed to unmask and make visible AA and their disabling and enabling actual and potential use. AA conflicts are already exhibited in disabled-non-disabled humans, human-human in general, humans-animals, human-nature, humans-post/transhumans, humans-cyborg humans and human-non sentient machines relationships and will appear in human-sentient machine, animal-sentient machine and nature-sentient machine relationships. AA conflicts between groups of humans are evident in many political discussions and are also evident in how COVID-19 was/is dealt with. I showcase below two tools that I am using with students and others to make people realise the multifaceted nature of AA, the many abilities people take for granted and the unconscious judgments that people make that are linked to AA.

7.1 The BIAS FREE framework

Fulfilling AA is one factor that allows one to join dominant groups. The dominant groups themselves define AA and use AA as tools to generate and justify social hierarchies. It is reasonable to expect that to maintain their power, whether consciously or unconsciously, dominant groups will maintain their negative attitudes towards the "others" and use it as a means to preserve their position in the hierarchy and keep their ability privileges (Wolbring, 2014a).

The BIAS FREE (Building an Integrative Analytical System For Recognizing and Eliminating in Equities) framework (Eichler & Burke, 2006a, 2006b), is a tool for identifying biases that are derived from social hierarchies. The biases can be divided into three distinct set of problems, a) maintaining an existing hierarchy, b) failing to examine differences and c) using double standards. Maintaining hierarchy presents itself in: accepting hierarchy as natural, denying hierarchy exists, adopting the perspective of the dominant group, applying the norms of the dominant groups to non-dominant groups, objectification of specific persons or groups, pathologisation, victim blaming and appropriation. Failing to investigate the difference presents itself in the insensitivity to differences, decontextualization, over-generalization or universalization and assumed homogeneity. Using double standards presents itself in overt double standard, underrepresentation or exclusion, exceptional under-representation or exclusion, denying agency, treating dominant opinions as facts, stereotyping, exaggerating differences and hiding double standards (Eichler & Burke, 2006a, 2006b).

The BIAS FREE Framework has been applied to various topics such as gender and race. One project applied the BIAS FREE Framework to policies related to disabled children in Kyrgyzstan (H4, H5, F1, F4, D1, D2 (Burke & Pupulin, 2009)) I use the BIAS FREE Framework in various undergraduate and graduate University classes.

I posit that the BIAS FREE Framework is a useful tool to unmask AA based social hierarchies, AA biases that drive other-ism and other AA linked problems of social hierarchies.

7.2 Tools to engage with AA: AA Exercises

The second tool I want to mention is the performance of AA exercises. My research group published a variety of AA exercises covering the unmasking of AA participants and the consequences of their AA, AA related to advancements in science and technology, AA related to different societies, peace related AA exercises and AA linked to being an active citizen, to mention a few topics (Wolbring, 2017b, 2019; Wolbring et al., 2020). One can develop unlimited amounts of exercises given that AA is so multifaceted.

8.0 Conclusion

Sherwin, an eminent bioethicist stated, "we [ethicists] lack the appropriate intellectual tools for promoting deep moral change in our society" (Sherwin, 2011, p. 80). She further states that "to find ways of addressing these difficult questions, we need to learn about the levers of social and political change" (Sherwin, 2011, p. 80)". I have argued elsewhere that "understanding ability expectation dynamics is essential for understanding how to make a real difference" (Wolbring, 2012b, p. 300). I stated further that "ethical reasoning and the use of ethics theories per se does not lead people or institutions to change. Change in ability expectations are the levers of social and political change" (Wolbring, 2012b, p. 300). The question is who has the power to push their AA and which AA do they push for what intent.

I hope that the paper has showcased the complexity of AA. There are many issues in need of data and policy decisions. The ability studies lens which is a system analysis tool could be used to cut down on silo thinking and to call out social hierarchies that are detrimental. The paper also hopes to show that the challenge of AA is a constant one with new AA constantly appearing and old ones becoming obsolete.

We need a much stronger and systematic AA governance discourse, in addition to a mapping out of AA conflicts and a much bigger community of practice on AA governance (Wolbring, 2015, 2017b, 2019).

I leave the reader with a quote from a 2003 computer game which sums up the pervasiveness of AA and the need for AA governance.

> "Conversation between Alex D and Paul Denton:
> **Paul Denton**: If you want to even out the social order, you have to change the nature of power itself. Right? And what creates power? Wealth, physical strength, legislation — maybe — but none of those is the root principle of power.
> **Alex D**: I'm listening.
> **Paul Denton**: Ability is the ideal that drives the modern state. It's a synonym for one's worth, one's social reach, one's "election," in the Biblical sense, and it's the ideal that needs to be changed if people are to begin living as equals.
> **Alex D**: And you think you can equalise humanity with biomodification?

Paul Denton: The commodification of ability – tuition, of course, but increasingly, genetic treatments, cybernetic protocols, now biomods – has had the side effect of creating a self-perpetuating aristocracy in all advanced societies. When ability becomes a public resource, what will distinguish people will be what they do with it. Intention. Dedication. Integrity. The qualities we would choose as the bedrock of the social order. (Deus Ex: Invisible War[5])".

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[5] Deus Ex: Invisible War. (Wikiquote) http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Deus_Ex:_Invisible_War (Retrieved August 11, 2020).

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PROVCATIONS

“Resetting” Extraction and Ableist, Colonial Pandemic Manifestations[1]

Khairani Barokka

To understand extraction capital as what undergirds so much of the “global” in arts industries, and to understand this extraction as the ground on which ableism and colonialism (which continue apace and are interwoven) are built on, is to understand that “resetting the global” in light of COVID-19 is somewhat of a false moniker. And that the so-called “bugs” to overcome during this pandemic (genuinely no pun intended) form the basis of the system itself.

The untrue notions that “the old world” pre-COVID-19 – and here, note the colonial parallel with Europe as “the old world” – has somehow been put on hold to its absolute core due to this pandemic is as false as the denial that disabled and chronically ill people have been subject to a genocide at this time, a continuance of violence that never ceased. What is happening now is a denial of our very existence, excluding chronically ill and disabled perspectives in, of all things, an actual global pandemic of illness – excluding we millions of disabled and chronically ill artists and educators, who have been working under pandemic conditions for decades, yet whose work is still rarely highlighted, consulted, or cited amidst a rise in non-disabled artists’ work on “newfound isolation”. All of this is in fact an apex of ableism. Of ableism as part of colonial logics that involve land, wealth, power, and a eugenics, based on expendability to colonial capitalism – all of which form the basis of the fine arts industry.

The term “resetting” calls to mind bringing something back to full speed, full power. What is vital to understand is that the deaths of hundreds of thousands around the world *is* very much a manifestation of the systems some think have been slowed down completely – things could only have been this bad if whole populations were stolen from, over centuries, if the mass industrialisation attendant with colonialism were to shape systems of food and agriculture around the world, facilitating food insecurity that does not get spotlighted often on the international news in the UK. If systems were set up to privilege capital accumulation over the preservation and welfare of human life, and if all of these things colluded with the Western art world, as all of us in capitalism collude with it, and are complicit in it to different degrees.

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[1] This is the full text of a presentation made in session I, ‘Resetting the Global’ on 9 July 2020 of the two-day webinar titled ‘Art Criticism and the Pandemic’ jointly organised by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Chris McCormack, Associate Editor of *Art Monthly*. A review of the full event appears in Reviews section of this journal pp. 116-120.

This is fundamentally an issue of differing chronologies and chronotypes, and models for not only time and space, but for describing the body-minds that the art world thinks it lays claims to.

To "reset" the art world seems very much in line with the prioritisation of ruthlessly oligarchic capitalist economics over saving lives that continue to be very much at risk. Just speaking from the perspective of someone who is "high risk" for COVID-19, and who takes no solace in the "opening up" process I see in the UK and elsewhere. As I wonder, as many of us wonder (disabled and chronically ill people being, I like to underscore, the largest minority in the world) when we particularly as migrants will be able to see our loved ones in other countries again.

Many people's ideas of "resetting the global" to my mind, means continuing the system that has actually been kept in place, has been persistently held down, during this pandemic. As Tuck and Yang say, "decolonization is not a metaphor"[2]; after all colonial capitalism is very much not a metaphor – during this pandemic, land, property, and wealth, so much wealth, has still not been repatriated or restituted, nor have colonial laws keeping them in place been abolished. It is this same system that has allowed governments the world over to escape culpability for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. It is the system that has ensured certain people have kept their profit prioritisation on the to-do lists of governments.

In Jasbir Puar's book *The Right to Maim* (Duke University press, 2017), at the same time as nation-states such as the UK and the US fund accessibility measures for their citizens, their funding bodies have the right to maim others through other policies, creating disabled bodies in places where the processes of colonialism have deliberately defunded healthcare, including in places within these countries with a high percentage of people of colour. (Taken through a certain lens, my own disability is a result of defunding of healthcare in underserved populations in both the US and Indonesia, where my condition was mismanaged and exacerbated.) As I recently wrote in *Art Monthly*,[3] increasing "access" seems to be tied indelibly in people's minds with increasing D/deaf and/or disabled people's access to existing physical and social structures of the art world. Whereas, taking into account what Puar writes, the Western art world has never been confined to European and/or English-speaking countries. And we know this to be true. By virtue of donors, funding chains of command, and colonial financial flows past and present, the "Western art world" has also always been the Indonesian mining industry, the Bolivian political system, weapons brokers affecting both Palestine and Ferguson (both, of course, places where tear gas from Safariland, owned by former Whitney Museum Board Member Warren Kanders, operates). And so on. The art world is interconnectedness, and has always meant mass dispossession, endangerment, and killing commensurate with the astronomical prices of "fine art".

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[2] Tuck, E. and Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor, *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, Vol. 1.1, pp. 1-40.

[3] Available at: https://www.artmonthly.co.uk/magazine/site/article/how-to-make-art-in-a-pandemic-by-khairani-barokka-june-2020.

There are contexts in which it is understandable to say that something is no surprise, and nonetheless shocking. That includes times like now, when we are witnessing a shocking lack of solidarity, a shocking erasure of disabled and/or chronically ill perspectives on every aspect of society, including "the art world", in light of a literal genocide of disabled and/or chronically ill people. As disabled women in the UK, to quote a recent BBC News article, we are "roughly 11 times more likely to die from COVID-19", with new data suggesting around two-thirds of people who have died of coronavirus in the UK have been disabled. And this danger is heightened for those of us deemed "BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic)", also disproportionately likely to die. And heightened yet again for those of us who are, on top of this, migrants with no recourse to public funds.

This is due to the fact that resources for healthcare and wellbeing have been starved from communities as a whole, that key workers who are "BAME" and/or disabled are more likely to be recipients of prejudice, and due to these power dynamics, are less likely to report mistreatment and endangerment, including widespread refusal to grant PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). These dynamics are borne out when workers like Belly Mujinga[4] were not given PPE by their employer and left them more vulnerable to misogynoir and to hate crimes, one of which cost them their life. These dynamics are borne out when those who have been made chronically ill by COVID-19 are not supported for this illness, and how stolen-from communities are less likely to receive psychological support amidst all of this.

The ableism, racism, and colonialism that undergirds extraction capital is what has caused the impact of COVID-19 to be so enormous. It is an understanding of the art world as only "global" without honouring local communities – and more than that, as "global" precisely because it dishonours local contexts and communities.

Ableism needs to be understood as the processes that deem only some kinds of bodies "good bodies", meaning worthy of saving, of protecting, of honouring, of uplifting. This is why racism is ableism. This is why capitalism is ableism. Why both are part of so many colonialisms, that continue into the present.

The least we can do is not pretend like we do not live amidst a massacre. That all we have to do is to continue to think of art as always an inherent good, no matter who dies in association with it. That all any of us have to do is keep calm and carry on.

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[4] 'Belly Mujinga's death: Searching for the truth' by Rianna Croxford (13.11.2020), BBC Panorama, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-54435703.

PROVOCATIONS

The killing of Eyad Al-Hallaq by the Israeli border police on 30 May 2020

Tanmoy Bhattacharya

An autistic body is a threat to the functioning of a neoliberal state. And as Israeli border police demonstrated on 30 May 2020, such a 'late' body with its impaired communication and social skills, is only fit to die. Eyad Al-Hallaq was not just 'disabled' by his autistic body but also by his racialised body. The ruthless Israeli border police therefore had no second thoughts before emptying out a bevy of bullets into this doubly disabled body of a 32-year-old Palestinian man.

Summarising the description of the day by Gideon Levy, the only Israeli journalist who writes humanisingly about Palestinians – and therefore considered a traitor by the Israeli media – Eyad used to work as an assistant for the cooking classes at Elwyn El Quds, a special-needs centre situated about a kilometre from Wadi Joz in East Jerusalem where Eyad lived with his parents. The centre opens at 7:30 A.M., but Eyad liked to arrive early, so, on that fateful day, he started a little after 6 A.M. Warda Abu Hadid, 47, Eyad's caregiver, also started from her home headed for the centre. At about 6:10, Abu Hadid, passed by the border policemen, heard shouts of "Terrorist! Terrorist!" behind her.

Thereafter, she heard three shots and rushed to a nearby garbage room, and there she saw her ward Eyad running into the room in a panic and collapsed on the floor, lying there for three to five minutes, wounded, before he was shot and killed. "The whole time she shouted, 'He is disabled, he is disabled!' in Hebrew, and Hallaq shouted, 'Ana ma'aha!' – Arabic for 'I am with her' – as he attempted to cling to his caregiver for protection. … Three officers ran into the room screaming, 'Where is the rifle? Where is the rifle?' The officers aimed their weapons at Hallaq. They were at point-blank range, standing over him at the entrance to the garbage room. Abu Hadid kept trying to explain that Hallaq didn't have any sort of gun – he was only holding the surgical face mask that is required these days at the centre, and rubber gloves – when one of the officers fired three shots with his M-16 into the centre of the young man's body, killing him instantly."[1]

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[1] "'He's Disabled,' the Caregiver Screamed. 'I'm With Her,' Eyad Cried. The Cop Opened Fire Anyway" by Gideon Levy and Alex Levac published on 05.06.2020, in *Haaretz*, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-he-s-disabled-the-aide-yelled-i-m-with-her-eyad-cried-the-cop-still-shot-him-1.8896746 (accessed on 24.11.2020).

One of the ten principles of Disability Justice (Bhattacharya, forthcoming[2]) is *Recognising Wholeness*[3]:

> We value our people as they are, for who they are, and understand that people have inherent worth outside of capitalist notions of productivity. Each person is full of history and life experience. Each person has an internal experience composed of their own thoughts, sensations, emotions, fantasies, perceptions, and idiosyncrasies. Disabled people are whole people.

Disability Justice as a movement places special emphasis on people *as they are*, *who they are*, *where they are*, that is, it resists moulding people *into* something. Disability is a part of this wholeness. We will not now be privy to Eyad's inner thoughts or his internal experiences anymore, even if we ever hoped to peep into that rich world, we have now lost it forever. Eyad's autistic body will not have a history or life-experience that could enrich our collective understanding of another mode of being *whole*. A neoliberal state resists disabled bodies, and an aggressive Israeli state made sure that the value of Eyad *as he is* does not count and is obliterated for ever, the state instruments of border police is institutionally trained to achieve exactly such an effect.

However, it is not just Eyad's autistic body that comes in the way of the Israeli state.

The state lawyers for the two border police officers responsible for killing Eyad, Oron Schwartz and Yogev Narkis, made a statement on the same day as the killing took place (30 May 2020), justifying the barbaric act:

> As far as they were concerned, he was a terrorist for all intents and purposes. They acted in accordance with the explicit order they received from their superiors. One must remember that many terror attacks have been carried out in this area, and therefore the two acted according to protocol, while doing their best to apprehend the suspect.[4]

This brings in Eyad's Palestinian body into focus rather than his autistic body – 'terrorist' here is a cover-term for a Palestinian. This becomes even clearer in one of the first po-eds on the issue written by the commentator Eithan Orkibi for *Israel Hayom*, Israel's most widely read newspaper:

> The shooting in Jerusalem, as horrible as it was, did not take place on racial background, but in the context of a nationalist conflict, which unfortunately creates terror. Just this week there were those who told us an intifada was the

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[2] "Disability Justice (DJ) having been borne through the unease felt by especially disabled queer trans people of colour with mainstream disability activism, fuelled as it is historically through disability studies tenets, in terms of how it has managed to neglect and lay by the wayside disabled persons of colour and of varied gender identities." (Bhattacharya, T. (forthcoming). Shifting the epistemic centre: teachings from sign linguistics. In Jain, S. and Paul, T. (eds.) *Untitled volume*, Delhi: Indian Social Institute.)

[3] Berne, P., Morales, A.L., Langstaff, D., Sins Invalid (2018). "Ten Principles of Disability Justice" *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 4.1 & 2: 227-230.

[4] "Israeli Police Officers Shoot and Kill Disabled Palestinian in Jerusalem" by Nir Hasson, Jack Khoury, and Josh Breiner, published on 30.05.2020 in *Haaretz*: https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-border-police-shoot-dead-a-man-suspected-of-carrying-a-gun-in-jerusalem-s-old-city-1.8882656 (accessed on 24.11.2020).

> natural and desired result of all the talk about extending sovereignty. That is the reason for police presence in Jerusalem, and that is the background for the tension.[5]

This is in the context of the wide outpouring on the streets of both countries and the social media that weekend, where some people were carrying placards drawing parallels between the brutal killing by police of George Floyd in Minneapolis and of Eyad Hallaq in Jerusalem; Orkibi in the article denies the parallel.

It is not clear however, why there cannot be racism against an occupied people. Being a Palestinian and being a disabled Palestinian makes Eyad a citizen of a nation within a nation, but his only identity at the moment of his death, in fact the identity that was the *cause* of this death, was his Palestinian identity; that makes it immediately a race or even a religious issue. This reminds me of a recent online conference[6] where, Anat Greenstein, of the Isha L'Isha Haifa Feminist Centre, commenting on Fiona Kumari Campbell's talk,[7] talked about the intersection of disability and racism in connection with the topic of occupying spaces, a well-known disability studies theme.

Greenstein, drawing on the well-known difference between disablism and ableism,[8] shows us convincingly how the various events after Eyad's killing point towards the operation of disablism. First, Eyad's death, beside causing justified anger in the Palestinian community, also saw an unprecedented wave of empathy from many Israelis. Several parents of autistic children, religious and political leaders, visited the mourning tent set up by Eyad's family.[9] Greenstein also takes up the examples of opinions expressed in the media, where statements by an Israeli autistic activist, "Eyad is me and my friends",[10] or as in the opinion expressed by the editor of YNet's homepage, Salit Mivtach, who happens to have an autistic brother, "I imagine my brother in the same situation and my heart is broken".[11] Here, disability works as the overarching master identity.

Same is the case, as Greenstein analyses, with the Committee formed by the Israeli government under pressure from disability activists, aimed at improving police-disabled people relation. The police here will learn to behave, and adjust, in short, an anti-disablist

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[5] "Between Minneapolis and Jerusalem" by Eithan Orkibi in *Israel Hayom* on 31.05.2020; https://www.israelhayom.com/opinions/between-minneapolis-and-jerusalem/ (accessed 24.11.2020).

[6] "Accessible Futures: Intersecting Futurity and Disability" online conference held September 7 – 10, 2020, organised by the Milli Blum Disability Studies Centre, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

[7] 'Studies in Ableism (SiA): A Threat to Disability Politics or an Opportunity to explore Interest Convergence?' by Fiona Kumari Campbell on 9 September 2020 at the conference noted in Note 6.

[8] Disablism, on par with sexism or racism, denotes a set of assumptions that give rise to discriminatory behaviour and acts/ practices towards disabled persons. Disablism has been the basis of much activism, that led to the rights approach. Ableism on the other hand, questions the normality that is assumed and 'standardised'. I argue later in the paper, why anti-disablism ought to be a prerequisite for establishing any possible anti-ableist movement for nations with poorer economies.

[9] As described in "Exploring the convergences and tensions of ableism and racism: Covid-19, police violence and the 'Justice for Eyad' campaign: A response to Fiona Kumari Campbell" by Anat Greenstein at the online conference noted in Note 6.

[10] https://shavvim.co.il/2020/05/31/אני-לא-רוצה-להאשים-אף-אחד-רק-למנוע-את-המ/?fbclid=IwAR3iS1qyypOK-TyoNRa6iqCZcJPW9rmLTVsi_bUv1eSi6Ez8hP8ouYop2PI (accessed on 24.11.2020)

[11] https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5741087,00.html (accessed 24.11.2020)

approach. The situation on the ground will hopefully improve for the disabled population, less of disabled persons will be killed by brutal police, I guess. But will it change the ground? Not really.

Similar is the reaction of the central and various state governments to the ongoing crisis generated by COVID-19 in India. In fact, even before the announcement by the Ministry of Home Affairs on 24 March 2020 of the first nationwide 21-day lockdown, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), issued a guideline called 'Comprehensive disability inclusive guidelines for protection and safety of persons with disabilities during COVID-19' on 23 March 2020 for all the States to follow. However, National Human Rights Commission released an advisory on 1 September 2020, prepared by an expert committee that mentions at the outset that "while the DEPwD guidelines addressed many issues of persons with disabilities that needed urgent attention, the same were not made mandatory and were simply termed as *measures suggested which need to be acted upon by various State/ District authorities*".[12]

Furthermore, an examination of all the related documents reveal that only a couple of the suggestions somehow made repeated appearances in the related State documents, namely, the need for presenting all COVID-related information in accessible formats, and the need to simplify issuance of curfew passes to caregiver – both informed by an anti-disablist approach. For example, as early as 4 April, 2020, during the first phase of lockdown, the Office of the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities of Delhi issued an order (No. Misc./COVID-19/2020/04) for "Issuance of Curfew Passes to the Caregiver of Person with Disability during lockdown" because apparently caregivers were being denied passes. This order was issued only when disabled persons, facing acute problem of procuring even basic provisions due to the absence of caregivers, raised it in the first place; this is evident and clearly mentioned in the letter issued on 31 March 2020 (No. 16-3/CCD/2018) by the Central government from the Office of the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disability:

> … this Office has been receiving complaints regarding difficulties being faced by PwDs in getting services of caregivers, maid and access to essential items due to non-issue of travel passes to NGOs/ PwD Associations/ caregivers etc.

This shows that nobody was aware of this problem until then. However, I would still like to make the case for disablism as well, in such cases, especially for a country where prioritisation of services is practised quite openly and without any sense of guilt on the part of the establishment. If denial of essential services cannot be the cause of protests, then what else can one start with? Although, I believe Anat Greenstein raises an important issue by emphasising *both* disablism and ableism as instruments to achieve equality and equity, I would like to make the specific case for disablism to be our primary target, without which, the bigger struggle for ableism may never be begun.

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[12] https://nhrc.nic.in/sites/default/files/NHRC%20Advisory%20on%20Disability_0.pdf (accessed 25.11.2020)

Coming back to Eyad, note how the identity marker changes from race to disability as we move from the moment of his death to post-death. If the mourning caused the massive wave of sympathy/ empathy across the divides, engendered by the master identity of disability, that same identity completely disappears at the moment of his killing, where the only identity that emerges is his Palestinian identity. And training the police to behave from this perspective implies learning to recognise operation of more than one identity at a time.

In this connection, it is interesting to go back briefly to the editorial by Salit Mivtach, mentioned by Greenstein as an example of disability-as-a-master-identity. If we study the extended text of Mivtach's opinion (see Note 11), we find several statements that highlight Eyad's racial identity: 'he also accidentally had the wrong skin color'; ' … Ashkenazi autistic, would it have ended in eight shots in the garbage room even then?'; 'just because he was born with the wrong skin color.' This shows that at least some of the empathetic Israeli mourners were not swayed by the singular identity of Eyad's disability.

However, the fact that neither the killing of Palestinians in Israel nor the killing of disabled people in other parts of the world (mostly in the US) is uncommon, I am not sure how much of ground realities are going to change. Just to take one example of the former, Gideon Levy reports that on the night of 14 November 2019, 9 close family members of an 11-year-old Palestinian girl Noor were killed by Israeli air force bombings in their sleep.[13] Apparently, their ramshackle tin hut with walls made of plastic sheeting, was identified as an "Islamic Jihad training facility" (*ibid*). An air force investigation later found that "The operation created conditions to improve the situation in Gaza" (*ibid*).

And just to take one example of the former, on 24 May 2017, the West Milwaukee police broke into Adam Trammell's flat after a neighbour's complaint, fired 15 tasers at him, dragged him outside and pinned him down to inject sedatives Midazolam and Ketamine repeatedly; within a few moments, Adam stopped breathing and was pronounced dead.[14] His only crime – being diagnosed with Schizophrenia. Milwaukee's chief District Attorney, John Chisholm ruled "there was no basis to conclusively link Mr Trammell's death to the actions taken by the police officers," and, of course, no police officer was found guilty of any offence – chillingly similar to statements by the State lawyers and the commentator in *Israel Hayom* in the case of Eyad's killing by the Israeli border police (see Notes 4 and 5). Adam's mother Kathleen's statement, "He was just *in his own place*, he was not out on the streets" takes us back to the Disability Justice principle of *Wholeness*[15]– the importance of respecting people as they are, where they are.

Black lives may matter – at least till the campaign lasts, Palestinian lives and disabled lives, on the other hand, never mattered anyway, so all the efforts of adjusting through

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[13] https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-here-s-happens-with-idf-investigations-into-deaths-of-innocent-palestinians-1.9202606 (accessed 24.11.2020).

[14] To get a complete picture of crimes against disabled persons committed by the State in the US (136 documented, and many more otherwise, cases in 2018 alone), read the excellent report *Don't shoot, I'm disabled* By Aleem Maqbool for BBC News at https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-45739335 (accessed 24.11.2020).

[15] See Notes 2, 3.

police-in-the-community will only lead to a mass explosion in near future. And hopefully, then, perhaps, not just the ground reality, but the ground itself will change. That will be the true anti-ableism moment.

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Commentary

This is a commentary on a paper that was read during the 52nd reading group session of the *CDSI* (Critical Disability Studies in India)[1] on 18th July 2020. The paper that was taken up was a slightly older manuscript version of the paper "Ahimsa and the ethics of caring: Gandhi's spiritual experiments with truth via an[2] idea of a vulnerable human body" by Hemachandran Karah, published in a volume titled *Disability, Avoidance and the Academy: Challenging resistance*, during the session are identified in different colours and by the name of the person who made the comment in square brackets right at the beginning of a particular comment. After incorporating all the relevant comments made by the group members, we sent the paper with comments to the author of the paper for their comments, to be published in the next issue of the journal. The version below therefore contains several interruptions/ interpretations by the members of the CDSI group.

[Tanmoy] Today's reading has come about while discussing Campbell (2019)[3], especially her new stance on ableism—while talking about variability (p. 153) and discussing the concept TAB (temporarily abled body) and its problems when Sameer suggested that we take up Hemachandran's paper along with the ableism papers; and since the group has not read an Indian text for a long time, it was thought that it might be a good idea to stick to this paper. The first point is about how ableism problematises TAB and how the Gandhian model fits into that, since Gandhi's experiments are also about contingent disabilities. Secondly, keeping the next meeting in mind, where Fiona herself will join us[4], we should try and see how this paper or the idea therein relates to the ableism model.

[Sameer] I mentioned 'Reading Gandhi' by Dr Hemachandran Karah within the context of disability, rights-based orientation and vulnerable bodies. In the background of such critical engagement by Campbell, we did in our last session where she appeared to privilege global South discourses about the organisation, some of us felt uncomfortable, also intrigued, about how bodies could be utilised as a centre-point to create a liberal dialogue of disability from the Global South. There was a somewhat heated discussion on the politics of terminology that happened when Prof Anita Ghai tried convincing young scholars like me and others in the group about the ways one could construct a liberal politics of disability by moving away from the social model of disability (Radical Politics) to a debate where body and its temporal vulnerable nature are discussed. Yogesh's understanding of Prof. Dan Goodley's

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[1] https://sites.google.com/view/cdsi/home
[2] 'an' was replaced by 'the' in the published version of the paper.
[3] The paper referred to here is "Precision ableism: A studies in ableism approach to developing histories of disability and abledment" by Fiona Kumari Campbell (*Rethinking History*, 2019, Vol. 23, No. 2, 138–156) that was discussed in the 51st reading group session of the CDSI on 27th June, 2020.
[4] This refers to the 53rd meeting of the CDSI held on 8th August, 2020.

conceptualisation of Dis/ability is akin to how Gandhi approached questions of self-reflexivity and attitude towards the other in *Hind Swaraj*[5]. It made me suggest a rereading of Gandhi from a critical disability perspective as I feel the reading and the author both could be placed under the larger rubric of critical disability studies. As per my reading goes, the usage of *ahimsa* goes well with the way the author has utilised the concepts of masculinity and heterosexuality as violence.

[Abhishek] Picking up from the last discussion [see note 3] on Fiona Kumari Campbell's paper which talked about how the able/disable dichotomy needs to be revisited, it was see that inspired by Buddhist Philosophy, she uses ideas like *Paticcasamuppada*[6], to suggest that since bodies are impermanent, we need to engage in more of a spiritual exercise. And this paper has the same tone even when it's not exactly talking about disability. If we try to force a connection to Critical Disability Studies, then we can say that this paper, like papers by Dan Goodley and Fiona K. Campbell, emphasises on breaking old boundaries and looking at things from a new perspective.

[Sharmishthaa] Fiona's way of using Buddhist philosophy maybe does not have any spiritual tone to it; whereas this paper definitely talks about the spiritual interpretation of Gandhi's experiments. The two papers are of different categories as disability and the theories themselves are dealt very differently by the two scholars. Buddhist epistemology is an established school of thought and Gandhi uses such schools of thought to achieve a certain political aim

[Tanmoy] About the paper, I have a fear that our old critique of the label 'divyangjan' may also apply to Hem's interpretation of Gandhi and Gandhi's own take on 'marginalities', itself.

[Ritika] One would like to add here that the paper seems to present a unidirectional flow of action. The action is always supposed to emerge from the side of the 'able' bodied person, towards those with a disability, in this case a person with leprosy. What then is the giver of this care learning from the person with leprosy, if anything at all? Is this not very similar to a pity or charity model?

[Tanmoy] Exactly (agreeing here with Ritika's point about directionality in Gandhi's action and how this seems like a Charity model all over again), but note that Hem's language is constructed carefully enough so that it doesn't imply that a disabled person cannot be a 'giver' of care but it also doesn't include such a possibility by articulating it. There is nothing in the paper which indicates that this direction of care is included but there's nothing that excludes

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[5] *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* is a book written by Mohandas K. Gandhi in 1909. In it he expresses his views on Swaraj, modern civilization, mechanisation etc. The book was banned in 1910 by the British government in India as a seditious text [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hind_Swaraj_or_Indian_Home_Rule]

[6] *paṭiccasamuppāda* is Pali version of the Sanskrit expression *pratītyasamutpāda*, "commonly translated as dependent origination, or dependent arising, [it] is a key doctrine of Buddhist philosophy." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pratītyasamutpāda]

it either. However, this is absolutely the right critical approach to the paper and a CDS group like ours would do exactly that.

[Santosh] (Talking about the collection Sandhya Kumar (2019) *Jeevan Sangram ke Yoddhaa*, NBT) Some of the stories collected in the book have disabled characters that take care of their relatives. For example, one story has a hunchback character who raises her nephew after the death of his parents (Sacchidanand Dhoomketu's 'Ek Thi Shakun Di'). Similarly, in one story the main character who is physically impaired, decides to remain unmarried and keep her sister and widowed sister-in-law with her after retirement. I am currently writing about these characters in the collection.

[Abhishek] (talking emotional support by disabled persons to others) Just adding onto the point made by Santosh, saying how in his personal experience he finds that the relation is of interdependence and the emotional person ends up providing a lot of emotional support to families/carers.

[Tanmoy] Yes, of course Abhishek, actually in this group, we talked about this in detail many times, when Sameer and others shared how they in fact provide emotional support to many of their friends. But I think we should look at the present paper not taking it as a paper situated within the DS model, just because the author is person with disability (and we know him, he was very much a part of the group initially when he was briefly in Delhi). He's rather exploring other ways of understanding disability. It so happens that this particular take has been done before but still, we shouldn't pre-judge the paper.

Ahimsa and the ethics of caring: Gandhi's spiritual experiments with truth via an idea of a vulnerable human body

Hemachandran Karah

Mahatma Gandhi's principle of ahimsa (i.e., nonviolence) concerns not a mere absence of violence, but an active pursuit of peace by way of satya or truth. Ahimsa demands of the followers that they eschew violence, and still better, uphold satya in speech, thought, and action. Doing so, it is believed, one can facilitate a spiritual transformation of the atman or soul which resides within the temporary 'tabernacle' of the human body. For Gandhi, such a tabernacle seems an appropriate object for a spiritual experimentation with ahimsa since it is prone to myriad vulnerabilities, and therefore diversely disposed to an ethic of caring against structural violence.

[Tanmoy] This paragraph has the word 'tabernacle', it's a well-known word in the context of a biblical reference, in particular. In terms of meaning, it means just a 'tent' which was supposed to be in the middle of the desert, near Palestine, where Jesus met Moses and otherwise a specific location surrounded by other tents with people from different tribes, where basically God's appearance takes place.

Now, if you know Hem's academic background, he has a PhD from Cambridge on English literature, and if you follow the style in the first part of the paper, you will notice a lot of symbolism to do with the Charkha, the mother's breast etc. Yet this word tabernacle, which lends itself to a lot of symbolism and metaphoric interpretation, he doesn't use it as such, he uses it to merely denote a temporary place of habitation for the spirit/ soul. Tabernacle has been used metaphorically in many other texts, not disability texts, but perhaps more to do with gospel teaching or religious mythology.

The second is a minor point in the 2nd sentence itself, 'speech, thought and action' are used in that order, which is interesting because at the very end, I think the last line, the order becomes 'thought, speech and action', where he is talking about the politics of intention. And one of the relevant points that should emerge there is about intention, it's intention that characterises a person, but Gandhi's point is also about action which is important – it's action and not an abstract idea which gives one transcending possibility. Personally, I feel that this point about intention from the point of view of a person with disability is relevant, perhaps this is a controversial point, and I am open to criticism, but should intention necessarily precede action for a person with disability?

Also, personally, I believe, that the term 'accommodation' that Hem uses from Gandhi, which we can take to be inclusion, also must have a pre-condition that mental accommodation must precede physical accommodation, because I believe that the other way round is not true accommodation. This refers to the sequence cited above, and it cannot be 'thought, speech, action'.

[Vageshwari] For Gandhi, I believe, it was accommodation rather than inclusion, as inclusion is 'more to do' with mental change whereas accommodation is about creating a space physically. I think these can be seen as two different concepts and cannot be put under a sequence. For a person with disability I believe both accommodation and inclusion are necessary. All throughout Gandhi's experiments with himself, with his relations or with changing his attire in order to fit himself in a community were all merely accommodations initially. In London, he got rid of his tuft which was only so that people don't laugh at him and then he acquired western clothes too, and when he realised that the clothes were a powerful political statement, as a sign of mourning to protest he shaved his head and wore *dhoti kurta*, then as a *kathiawad* peasant and so on and finally as he announced that he will give up his *topi* and vest and take on loin cloth as an "experiment for a month or two" to which he gradually got mentally accustomed to as well and so never gave it up.

Certain corporeal vulnerabilities that become significant to him this way include nakedness, transgendering, and leprosy. Gandhi's tactic of ahimsa is unique since he, first, meticulously prepares himself for a spiritual identification with such vulnerabilities and, second, utilises his intimate knowledge of them to evolve a universal ethic of caring. Such an ethic is usually aimed at rehabilitation of violent structures, in order that they become sites of individual and collective spiritual transformation. What emerges in the process is a spectrum of approaches to violence that treat bodily vulnerability as an experiment in ahimsa, duly informed by the principle of universal care. Disciplines concerned with structural violence such as disability studies, I propose, may benefit from these approaches; especially their readiness to transcend contingent stances concerning violence.

[Tanmoy] structural violence in reference to disability, but very soon the paper will talk about his experiments with how to queer (male) sexuality in order to understand how to construct peace.

[Nidhi] Gandhi emphasises on the connection from individual to nation, wherein individuals are the basic unit of a nation. In this sense, he gives importance to each individual.

[Tanmoy] yes, we need to discuss this further, as this paper shows that Gandhi is talking of going from an individual action to a collective teaching/ action, so in the context of this paper, it can't be the case that Gandhi is interested in personal, individual level of caring.

The naked poor, inner worlds, and the spiritual medium of khadi

The idea that the human body is a makeshift tabernacle of the atman, and that it is vulnerable to structural violence, becomes apparent to Gandhi during his extensive travel across rural India. The nearly naked poor in that part of the world bring him closer to harsh contexts of economic deprivation, and perhaps their inner spiritual tatter as well. To persuade himself in identifying with the naked masses, and their tattered inner lives, Gandhi takes to khadi (i.e., home-spun cloth), but just enough to wrap his waist. With this gesture, he strips away certain favourite sartorial specialities such as an attorney's apparel that is machine-designed from Britain. What emerges as a consequence is Swadeshi, Gandhi's personal and public fight against foreign-made clothes based on the idea of self-reliance (Trivedi, 2007).

Gandhi's eventful stripping into a loin-cloth is in many ways a public dramatisation of an urge to taper a compulsive materialist mimic in him. For example, in changing over to a farmer's attire, Gandhi hopes to identify with the inner worlds of the millions, who perhaps do not have the wherewithal to afford even a minimal clothing. However, mere stripping may not get him there. For a start, he needs to meditate on vulnerabilities and the symbolic significance of certain vestments of power that still cling to his shoulders. His recollections of racism in South Africa serve such an end.

Envelopes of power closer to Gandhi's skin, such as a lawyer's habitus, underwent tumultuous impingements, and possibly a stripping in South Africa: he was thrown out of a train, fatally beaten by the police, and several times asked to get rid of his turban (Gandhi, 1948). Naturally, his inner worlds jittered, and perhaps appeared naked and vulnerable, as did layers of symbolic investments, including a shell of erotic love for his wife Kasturba. It is one thing to undergo a skin-ego torment amid upward mobility, but entirely another thing to convert it into a rich inner resource that may aid an ahimsa mission. Fortuitously, Gandhi discovers a priceless spiritual medium in Khadi that could indeed facilitate this. Sitting on a spinning-wheel or charka, Gandhi reasons, he, and the masses too, will be able to spin together coarse inner realities as though they were constituent bits of yarn in a Khadi fabric.

But in what way does poverty-induced nakedness affect inner worlds? A Reduction to rags may be a crude symptom of a structural malice that has no credence for self-dignity, and worse, a human need for a symbolic covering against naked exposure. To elucidate the idea of symbolic covering, we might consider for a moment Donald W. Winnicott's framework of attachment. Winnicott's interest in symbolism concerns the way it is deployed by children as a substitute for a mother's breast. Children recreate a mother's breast by a score of symbols so that its availability does not depend on hers. In preserving the mother's breast, and investing it with renewed meanings, the child begins exploring immediate boundaries, which Winnicott calls 'play'. Phenomena that transpire during a play with the mother-figure do not fully belong to a child's external reality. Nor do they emerge as pure interpsychic entities. In fact, they materialise as an exchange of objects within the cultural spaces created by the child and the mother dyad (Winnicott, 1971). Gandhi's version of play, I suggest, is spinning. Like play, spinning acknowledges the need for a dependency relationship in the care of the naked poor. As in play, spinning also entails inner objects exchanging with the immediate cultural environment, facilitated by a special bodily intervention. But unlike Winnicott's play, Gandhi's home-spinning is not based on an individualised caregiving dyad. Instead, it is a collective play for creating a medium such as khadi, which in turn connects one and all via a universal caregiving experience.

[Tanmoy] This section has to be read carefully, as the concepts of 'play' and other symbolism are intricately woven into the text — this is not our usual DS discourse which needs to be filtered out carefully. For example, this paper in the middle of the above paragraph says: spinning also entails inner objects exchanging with the immediate cultural environment, this is a little vague for me, what are 'inner objects' here?

[Nidhi] 'Inner objects', here, refers to our inner being. It has been understood as our truth, our soul or our spirit. To spin thread, requires a calm, meditative mind and spirit. This calm mind gradually discovers the rhythm of its being and body. The entire being moves together in harmony to spin thread. What I think Gandhi's craft based education offers to disability study is its emphasis on the individual. This emphasis is a journey inwards as well as with the outside world. The journey inwards helps an individual to discover him/herself, to find its purpose, its own pace and to accept its differences with confidence. This confidence in its own self emerges through practice of a craft. Every individual sees through practice their ability to create something useful. This becomes their contribution to society, which in turn gives dignity to the individual.

In other words, khadi's caregiving potential is derived not so much from a literal clothing norm. It is rather linked to esoteric yet universally realisable meanings that advocates of the fabric bring to it via a collective participation ethic. Given such a meaning-generating potential, Gandhi calls charka a piece of poetry. The comment comes amid a million khadi enthusiasts, who on a moment of withdrawal on the charka begin treating it with an intimacy noticeable only between an audience and a work of art, such as poetry. For example, while on the charka, as yarn after yarn spin away, a khadi devotee gets a chance to churn out textures of the self that remain non-ingested inside. Some of these non-ingested objects include, among others, aggression, hatred, narcissism, and an idea that an individual's boundary is all but a close-knit singular skin. Such is the cathartic power of charka, a poetic mirror, that Gandhi recommends everybody to present themselves in full to it, for at least half an hour a day. Clearly, some attribute their 'sleep of innocence' to charka, now, a mirror that can reflect back their longstanding negative projections, such as untouchability and religious hatred (Joshi, 2002). Thus, in uniting all (including the naked poor) with a rare symbolic intimacy, khadi emerges as a universal covering beyond a crude literalism. Such a covering, Gandhi recognises, is as precious as a parental safety blanket in a child's play. In fact, he calls khadi a Kamadhenu. In the Hindu mythology, Kamadhenu emerges as a bovine goddess and a symbol of bountifulness (Leeming, 2006). For Gandhi, Kamadhenu is what a symbolic breast is to Winnicott's typical child. Both the figurative arrangements serve well when the objects that they are supposed to represent – namely, khadi and a mother's breast – are available with a restriction.

[Tanmoy] Nidhi can you tell us more about the Kamdhenu equation here?

[Nidhi] Kamadhenu is a mythical symbol of 'plenty', 'abundance'. Here, I think the writer is recalling Gandhi's reference to khadi as kamadhenu. Khadi as one craft supports many crafts — agriculture, spinning, weaving, garment making — are some of the directly related crafts. Then it also supports other crafts of carpentry, blacksmithery, etc. This is one side of the coin that presents interdependence and sustainability through one craft and so once explored it gives plenty for survival. The other side concerns the individual. Khadi gives an opportunity to its practitioners to become aware of their abundant intellectual, physical and spiritual potential. It makes possible for a person to rely on its own capacities, become self-reliant and not just financially but also affectively, intellectually and physically.

[Sharmishthaa] the idea of charkha as a poetry- weaving the yarns of one's inner self-we know comes from the Bhakti movement. The reference is important here as seeing Gandhi only as a spiritual figure leaving aside his situatedness in India's politics then, would be a mistake to my opinion. He took spiritual or religious refuge at times to make things popular amongst the people. Thus 'Khadi as Kamdhenu' denotes khadi as an economic activity.

Neither the naked lot, nor a million hands on the charka are necessarily moved by Gandhi's special attraction for Kamadhenu. However, what ties them to Gandhi is his transcendent approach to structural violence on an inner self. Again, Gandhi's khadi mission appears accessible since one can relate to the idea that nakedness is a structural impingement, and a transcendence lies in a willingness to treat the same as an opportunity to build inner attachments that may potentially reform imperial structures by nonviolent means. Charka emerges as a nonviolent spiritual means in this regard, and not an end in itself.

Androgyny, queer kinships, and the deviant ethics of caring

Gandhi also voluntarily strips into a special kind of nudity as he remains clad in a loin-cloth. This time, the nudity concerns the symbolic figure of the 'androgyne', who becomes explicit about sexuality (Kumar, 2006). Gandhi's art of androgynising, especially its nude manifestation, concerns not so much an erotic desire, but a caring relationship that is meant to transcend an aggressive heterosexual norm. His keenness to queer heteronormative ethos, as well as a special immersion into a long tradition of Indian sainthood, renders such a androgynous figure uniquely transgressive.

An identification with a community of androgynous sadhus or ascetics is at its best when Gandhi takes to Brahmacharya (i.e., the vow of celibacy) after almost 23 years of married life with Kasturba. Although adopted with an intent to contain violent expressions of masculinity, the vow aids Gandhi in understanding the limitation of erotic love for an anaclitic love object. To understand his relationship with Kasturba, and other women associates as well, Gandhi prods his celibate body into enacting a female consciousness. To this end, he sets Ramakrishna Paramahansa, a 19thcentury mystic, and a rich lineage of male saints as his models. Paramahansa is supposed to have attained a perfect female consciousness, so much that he was able to simulate menstruation (Kumar, 2006). Gandhi does not go in that direction. Instead, he gradually takes to the idea of androgyny to understand first, traces of violence in an individual's sexuality and, second, the ways and means with which one can transcend it via a care ethic that is beyond trappings of an institution such as family, where a strict gender norm is in place. To reach a point where he can simulate androgyny beyond family constrains, he needs to gradually discard his skin-ego as a paterfamilias. To accomplish this, and to extenuate his family boundary, Gandhi takes to queering (i.e., a diminution of gender essentialism).

[Ritika] The understanding of gender within the text is also to be problematised. Just at the surface of it, we know that gender norms and roles are socially constructed. Then to say that masculinity is the source of violence is not apt at all. Since everything is learnt, one needs to distance oneself from the binary opposites of masculinity and femininity. Which of course also brings in the question of queer identities, but that is another complex debate altogether.

[Abhishek] I don't like the way he's using 'queering' here...

[Tanmoy] The term here is more to do with subverting the heteronormative.

[Abhishek] Plus there is a contradiction. While queerness and any sexual behaviour deemed subversive leads to social ostracization of the person, Gandhi uses subversion to claim a higher place in the ladder of morality, attaining a saint like status. So that is a problem which remains.

[Sharmishthaa] Apart from the problem of Gandhi using queerness as prosthetics, I want to add that as the author states in the beginning that 'Disability Studies might want to pick up from Gandhi's experiments as he tries to give a model to transgress the contingencies of the body and break through the structural violence', and if this experiment is to be seen with the perspective of an idea of a generic inclusion, even then the experiment doesn't seem to be inclusive enough as these experiments were only restricted to Gandhi himself and others in the Ashram were not allowed to have their own experiments, to the extent that they were not even allowed to marry without his permission, there are factual references for this.

In a queer kinship arrangement, household ceases to be a center of economic and cultural activity. Because of their credence to a loose organization of relationships, queer kinships also distance themselves from dyadic heterosexual bondings. Naturally, they remain amorphous and generic in character (Hines, 2007). Gandhi's brahmacharya experiments, in like manner, destabilise his household so that it becomes more of an ashram, a hermitage with an open door. A dyadic bonding between Gandhi and his wife – and for that matter, any special tie to a love-object – comes to a halt in the ashram. Rather than a paterfamilias figure, Gandhi too begins to relate to Kasturba as a brother, a parent, a friend, and what not. Over a period of time, the couple dissolve the tenacious opposition between eros and philia. Thus, a queering example thrives in Gandhi's ashrams, wherever they are. The ashrams are also inhabited by Gandhi's women associates who relate to him in different shades. Many of them self-identify with him as daughters, apostles, nurses, sisters, soldiers, amanuenses, and so on, all at once. Now, he calls Saraladevi Chowdharani, a woman associate as a 'spiritual wife', and Hermann Kallenbach, a jewish male associate, his 'Lower House' (Kumar, 2006). The special signification that lower house is a place of debate and multiple vocalisation, upper house the place of moderation, and that both the terms of reference are tied to a homosocial symbolism are hard to miss. So is the concept of spiritual wife, which can no longer be realised in a mundane heterosexual tie.

Speaking about the mundane, Gandhi's kinship has a place for the irrational and the 'mad' too. For example, his women associates Nilla Cram Cook and Margarete Spiegel, known as the 'mad duo', are encouraged to go astray – up to a point. Often compared to Isadora Duncan, an American innovator of dance, Cook arrives in at Gandhi's ashram as his disciple. She seeks mukti or liberation in dance, as much as Gandhi, who is now hailed by her as a soulmate. Gandhi calls her as his spiritual incarnate. Such a soulful interaction does not last for long: Cook's mad indulgence into the banal seems unacceptable to Gandhi. She is inspired by the story of Krishna of the BhagvatPurana. Like Gopis, the mystical female playmates of Krishna, Cook wishes to dance away in the banks of river Yamuna, engaging all her bodily self. This does not appeal to Gandhi who is rather enamoured by Krishna of the Bhagavad Gita, a being who is deliberative, dutiful, and yet caring. To constrain Cook's bohemian spirit, Gandhi gets her into a unisex attire. Feeling restricted and degendered, Cook leaves Gandhi, never to return to his queered cosmos (Kumar, 2006). Spiegel, who is often refered to by Gandhi as 'mad as a mad hatter', also flees. She is for ever on the look-out for an ideal love object. At one point, she falls for Gandhi, hailing him as a super-god. Yet in another instance, she swings into a bohemian worldview involving marriage, love, and passion (Kumar, 2006). Now, Gandhi who is suspicious about heterosexual love, begins treating Spiegel's compulsive embrace of the same as shere 'madness'. In other words, in Cook and Spiegel's situation, Gandhi seems to treat madness as a mental state that is primarily driven by an aggressive heterosexual orientation.

[Tanmoy] quite apart from 'madness', I have a problem here with Gandhi's objecting to two *women*, yeah both happen to be women, so it looks like when it comes to 'controlling' anybody's clothing, it has to be a woman's – we are all too familiar with this trope!

[Abhishek] It becomes more like a role-play where one person is controlling what he wants the other person to play. One day a mother/carer, the other day something else. In this, the power equation makes its problematic since it's Gandhi who is taking all the decisions.

A compulsory offer of unisex attire for Cook is by no means an exceptional event; it is more of a normative consideration concerning queering in Gandhi's brahmacharya scheme of things. Gandhi's queering ethos evolves over a period of four decades, roughly from the time he takes the brahmacharya vow. In the beginning, he seeks recourse to androgyny to organise an erasure of purusatva (heterosexual maleness), which he finds violent and domineering. Off and on, he overcomes the male ego by installing in him a naritva (i.e femaleness), and still better, a maternal consciousness (Nandy, 1989). The installation aids Gandhi to relate to others as a mother-figure, notwithstanding their age and gender. However, his heterosexual male ego does not withdraw that easily. In fact, Gandhi keeps a complete vigil so that he can prevent a coup by it on his personhood. Amid an almost absent erotic predisposition, he sleeps with a bevy of women, only to discover a transcendent third space that is beyond a strict gender binary. Inhabiting that third space, Gandhi inculcates a deviant ethic of caring that is less biased in favour of a heteronormative ideal. His brahmacharya life with Manu Gandhi – especially the one at Noakhali – is a testimony to the emergence of such a deviant norm.

Manu Gandhi – fondly known as Manudi – is bearly 19 when she becomes a somewhat reluctant partner to Gandhi's brahmacharya experiments at Noakhali. Noakhali, a district in the Eastern part of British India, experiences something near to a genocide during late 1946. To inculcate a nonviolent moral universe in that part of the world, Gandhi walks barefooted, miles after miles across Noakhali. Exposed to filth, thorns, and the biting chill, his feet fester and bleed. Tearful Manudi nurses his wounds, in the process training herself to be his devotee. For his part, Gandhi marches on, without a chappal lest he will tarnish Bumadevi (i.e., mother earth) with impurity. Also, in deviance to a saint and a devotee relationship, Gandhi sets in motion a microcosm wherein he strips himself nude along with Manudi. Together, they initiate a third space,which anchors a transcendent norm beyond sexual aggression, that is so rampant then at Noakhali. Manudi, with the insistance of her mentor, keeps a detailed record of their microcosm, however incorrigible it may appear to the outsider (Kumar, 2006). Encouraged by her familiarity with the third space, Gandhi also coaxes Manudi to travel all alone in the riot-ravished arena of Noakhali. He even allows Manudi to play a mother's role when they are on a boat ride: he goes to sleep on her lap like an infant. Now, the young mother and the infant son are in a position to confront Noakhali genocide, head-on. After all, to the septuagenarian queer teacher, bare-feet on bumadevi, a nude moment with Manudi, an infant recline on her lap, and the like, appear one and the same. They emerge as sacred instances of personal transformation, or an entry into a third space, where one can come in direct contact with heterosexual violence that erupts from within, and beyond. To summarise, Gandhi's brahmacharya experiments with Manudi appear deviant since, first, they focus always on a nude self and, second, they deploy the same for arriving at a rhetorics of care that is again idiosyncratic in character. Apparently, Gandhi does not succeed fully in preparing Manudi for a plain encounter with heterosexual violence. Nor is she able to put herself bear in toto on paper for a posterity. However, the experiments do manage to install a secure space within, which can potentially guide her in deviating from a rigid heteronormative ideal.

Gandhi's contemporaries declare brahmacharya experiments as adharma (i.e., a disharmonious enterprise). For its part, feminist scholarship justifiably rejects certain elements of one-upmanship in the project. However, what stands out in the experimentation is the idea of a non-biased care ethic concerning sexuality. Such a Gahndian idea seems to reside within an androgynous ethos where one is free to travel through, between, and beyond a strict binary gender norm.

[Tanmoy] at the end of this section, I am not sure how this experiment with sexuality, whatever it may finally teach someone, is related to anything to do with disability. Is it that structural violence that is perpetrated because of male sexuality is also the cause for structural violence that is disability? But why should these be equated? The next section is more relevant to disability.

[Abhishek] There is hardly any disability perspective within Gandhi's ideas as such and it reflects in this paper too. One of the reasons I think we are discussing this is because the author happens to work in the area of disability studies. But I am not sure how these ideas are useful in Disability contexts. Take the example of sexuality. Disabled men are deemed asexual and that's a battle for a lot of disabled persons but here the focus is on sexualizing yourself in search for a spiritual quest which I wonder whether it can fit into the a perspective for those studying disability studies.

Leprosy, a selfhood of accommodation, and a care ethic of the abject and the disgusting

At Noakhali, an androgynous ethos aids Gandhi to understand and perhaps transcend heterosexual violence. All the same, he is still puzzled about the sort of things that drive people to exterminate a fellow human being given a permissive situation. In seeking an answer to the riddle, Gandhi begins to meditate on emotions such as abjection and disgust that go on to annihilate a 'leper-figure'. A will to stamp out the other, a typically imagined leper-figure seems to suggests, is driven by the idea that the unwanted is a heap of putrid flesh, needing abjection and disgust at their fullest.

To carry forward emotions such as abjection and disgust to a distructive end, and never repent for the same, one needs nothing but a moral fence against the hated person. Gandhi calls such fence-makers 'moral lepers' (Jagadisan, 1965). Moral lepers look for moral putrescence within a physical anomaly such as leprosy. Apparently, in imitating a moral leper, one may develop a tendency to see nothing other than moral filth beneath the skin, especially in an adversary. If moral lepers were to ban themselves, Gandhi reasons, lepers with a mere physical anomaly will gain a legitimate interpersonal space. So goes Gandhi's meditations on leprosy during his Noakhali sojourn, which also seem to implicate those who are adversarially connected to the ongoing genocide. But this is not all, for Gandhi's leprosy work extends beyond a comparative moral view. In fact, over decades his leprosy work reconfigures notions of abjection and disgust, in order that they can serve a nonviolent caring ethic.

In common parlance, abject connotes extreme wretchedness and debasement. At the realms of the ego, Julia Kristeva reasons, abjection will assume certain definite forms such as horror and revulsion . Accordingly, these emotions play a crucial part in an ego that is at its formative stages of development. During the pre-symbolic stage, for example, an ego rejects anything that appears as a threat to its integrity and autonomy. Also, in enacting a rejection drama, the ego takes to affect and not reasoning (Lechte, 2003). An equally aversive feeling, disgust operates beyond Kristeva's ego-centric arena. It manifests as a rejection emotion that concerns a specific object that can unriddably nag a sensory system such as the haptic. Apparently, disgust induces one to take a flight and, at times, forcefully remove that which threatens to pollute and contaminate (Miller, 1998). However sensory it is, disgust does not always give rise to an aversive physical symptom such as nausea. Also, it may find a place in an everyday idiom where judgements abound about the aversive.

Gandhi rejects both abjection and disgust as legitimate means to erase the aversive. He is also less persuaded by an idea that an ego's survival depends upon an ability to reject an object that threatens its autonomy. However, conceding to the view that abjection and disgust are a matter of affect, he pleads restraint in deploying them as a rejection tactic. For example, in preserving a goodness of its peripheries, an autonomous self may put in place abjection and disgust to keep away the aversive. In the process, selfhood can become shallow, interested only in guarding a goodness of its own making. To remedy this, Gandhi recommends a cultivation of selfhood based on the idea of accommodation. In opening up itself for accommodation, Gandhi's radical selfhood not only breaks open a guarded boundary, but also makes itself available for negotiation with the aversive. In preparing himself for the aversive, Gandhi immerses into a sensorium of leprosy care so that he breaks open his much guarded periphery of selfhood, which is by and large shaped by a goodness filter involving abjection and disgust. Also, he voluntarily exposes himself to the culturally abject and disgusting about leprosy so that he can, first, open up his seemingly squeamish borders to the condition and, second, make leprosy care a test case of his preparedness for an accommodative nonviolence mission.

[Tanmoy] The idea of inclusion appears here in the form of accommodation, however, inclusion is mentioned only the very end within the context of DS.

We might take for example the kisan satyagraha procession at Champaran. Several satyagrahis (i.e., followers of 'truth force') march together in protest against oppression of farmers at Champaran. One of the satyagrahis is a leprosy patient. In the middle of the procession, the cloth bandage tied around his wounded foot tears open. With oozing blood and excruciating pain, the leprosy patient stops walking. Others march forward, unmindful of his pain. In fact, they fear and loath his leperous presence. On learning that the leprosy patient is absent for the evening prayer, Gandhi goes in search of him. After spotting him, Gandhi nurses the wounds, offers solace and comfort so that he is ready for the community event (Jagadisan, 1965). In this episode, and in many others involving leprosy, Gandhi drives home the idea that 'truth force' cannot transpire in abstraction. It will have to involve an ethos of accommodation so that those who are subjected to aversion find a place in it too.

[Tanmoy] 'truth force cannot transpire in abstraction' – much to say about this — it's the same belief that guides research in many fields where mere abstraction cannot reveal 'truth' apparently, but that is blatantly untrue – especially since 'ethos' means guiding principles or beliefs, in short, something abstract. Also, as I've mentioned several times in the past that most experiments in Science are thought experiments, i.e. in abstraction.

However, we must note the word 'transpire' here, i.e. for Gandhi what is important is that an action's validity is judged by not just initiation but its *passing through* another individual. But it can take place in abstraction, if not transpire.

Also, can one say that making space in one's mind is the first step in making physical space, i.e. accommodation? I think it's far more essential to make the mental space first and in fact treat it as a pre-condition. However, Gandhi's point is about thought that is driven by action, rather than the other way round. But when we apply this concept to the idea of inclusion, we need to reconsider that stance.

[Sharmishthaa] I believe the word 'accommodation' indicates physical and material changes and not the mental ones. Acceptance to my understanding, on the other hand, is more 'mind' oriented and accommodation is 'material' oriented.

[Tanmoy] accommodation in Gandhi in the context of leprosy is slightly guarded, (and as Nidhi said earlier), there is no total devotion to the other, at no stage is the own self given up. But true inclusion can only happen when one is mentally accommodating the other. Otherwise if it's only outward accommodation, it's only good behaviour and not true inclusion.

The directionality of action and intention is here important, it's not possible to evaluate intention by your action, does only good action indicate good intention? I am not sure about it. The other directionality issue that arises here is how's the disabled person accommodating the other?

In seeking to accommodate those who are deemed abject and disgusting, Gandhi also takes care to preserve their integrity; especially an inherent will to live, and self-anihilate, if necessary. His relationship with Parchure Shastri illustrates this very well. In 1932, Gandhi stays in Yeravada prison where Shastri also happens to be admitted in a cell allotted for lepers. Although he is forbidden to meet Gandhi, they have a regular letter correspondence. In one of the letters, Shastri explains to Gandhi that leprosy is becoming unbearable, and he wishes to end the misery by putting an end to his life. To this, Gandhi's answer is in the affirmative. He advises Shastri to go on a fast until death. An end this way will help him take control of his soul, and leprosy too that seem to take hold of his tabernacle of the human body (Jagadisan, 1965).

Shastri and his fellow-lepers undergo disgust. They experience taedium vitae (i.e., weariness of life). Decaying this way, they may by time face annihilation en masse. In recommending Samadhi maran, death by fasting, Gandhi reinstates the lepers' will over their lives, which appears hijacked by an aversive structure (Ganguly and Docker, 2007). But how exactly does Gandhi immerse himself in a sensorium of leprosy care to test the readiness of his selfhood of accommodation? He seizes every opportunity to be in closer proximity with the lepers. He nurses their wounds, exchanges food, and – in general – religiously takes to leprosy care as an instance of personal and ethical transformation.

[Tanmoy] I talked about this before. The first part of the above paragraph, given the impression that finally Hem is going to look at Gandhi critically, but by the end of the third sentence, he gives up. In fact, the kind of disjunction marker, 'But' at the start of the fourth sentence doesn't make sense, because it launches the discussion into a different topic. However way you look at this, 'Samadhi maran' cannot be condoned.

[Sharmishthaa] true, the idea that the best use of a deformed body is to come to an end for whatever good it may be, is indeed very problematic and echoes Peter Singer.

[Tanmoy] Also it's clear that Gandhi sees himself (and Hem sees it with him) as the 'provider' of care, from the leper, or any other marginality, but the other direction of care (see discussion at the beginning on this paper) never emerges here. What does the leper give him?

Amid religious overtones, leprosy-care also appears as a special cosmos in its own right. One can almost see this happening when Gandhi meets a convocation of lepers from a sanatorium at Chingleput. Gandhi's train stops for a while in Chingleput. Leprosy patients, around 700 in number, gather at the railway station to have a glimpse of the Mahatma. One of them, a girl with leprosy, offers a small sum to Gandhi as their humble contribution for the cause of untouchability. Deeply touched, Gandhi wakes up from a trance so that he is soulfully available to the lepers, all at once (Jagadisan, 1965). Later on, when Gandhi recollects the episode, he calls the leper convocation a temple. Now, in his worldview of caring, all the lepers seem like Hindu deities, available for an intense devotional dialogue at the realms of the conscience. With their darshan (i.e., a religious looking that transpires at the realms of conscience), Gandhi gets a glimpse of an ultimate care ideal that is beyond an aversive dynamic involving abjection and disgust. During the darshan, and thereafter, leprosy seems like a spiritual medium in which Gandhi can dissolve all possible inhibitions against the aversive. Thus, the Chingleput episode, and others involving leprosy, spiritually install in Gandhi a selfhood of accommodation that can treat abjection and disgust no more than the last of the defences that serve a selfhood of rejection.

[Tanmoy] words such as 'beyond' is exactly the reason I was suggesting the start that this view is very much in line with the whole 'divyangjan' logic – where disability is something 'beyond' being a human phenomenon or condition.

Kristeva acknowledges that societies seek recourse to rituals and positive symbolism to negotiate with the aversive, and so does Gandhi during his interactions with abject and the disgusting about leprosy. However, Gandhi's care ethic of leprosy inculcates the view that rejection affect and, by extension, abjection and disgust are not viable options to sustain selfhood. What also stands out in the Gandhian schema is a leprosy care ethic, which testifies to a selfhood of accommodation that needs neither abjection nor disgust for survival.

A vision of a non-violent selfhood based on care ethics of the corporeally vulnerable

Gandhi's crusade against violence has in its center an individual selfhood where structural frameworks such as heterosexuality animate, and perhaps gain legitimacy. In preparing a selfhood for peacebuilding, Gandhi is also on the lookout for ways and means with which he can strengthen it, and at the same time, guard against an aggressive individualist orientation. Individualist orientation, Gandhi realises, prompts people to narrow their boundaries, as much as the structures in which they are immersed. When such a thing happens, individuals and structures alike tend to withdraw from pursuing peace, and thereby become covert agents of violence. In searching for a remedy against individualisation, and its covert link to violence, Gandhi explores caring relationships involving the corporeally vulnerable.

For Gandhi, corporeal vulnerability comes across as a test case to understand, first, human resilience and a will to care for each other amid a structural impingement, second, their capacity to transcend a violent normative view and, third, their preparedness to expand a selfhood with a motivation to accommodate, to neither avoid nor reject. During moments of voluntary identification with androgynous people, for example, Gandhi comes to know that a cultural infrastructure such as heterosexuality is guided by a violent streak despite a social legitimacy. Equally, nakedness and leprosy offer Gandhi insights concerning the shapings of selfhood, and its orientation amid an aversive and a hostile context. While nakedness seems to drive in the point that all a selfhood requires is a positive symbolism for an altruistic orientation, leprosy demands a selfhood of accommodation which is less squeamish about the figure of the other.

Gandhi's experiments with nonviolence, especially the ones that concern a selfhood's place in a hostile structure, draw on an ethic of caring. If not for bodily vulnerability, Gandhi reasons, humanity may inculcate a selfhood that is both omnipotent and unscrupulous about its borders. Equally, goodness too will find no conduit beyond individualism so as to become a transcendental value system. It may remain as a cerebral abstraction, an immanent thing that does not touch anyone, including its possessor. Immanently founded or transcendentally expressed, Gandhi's principle of nonviolence based on a care ethic of the corporeally vulnerable simply aims to make people available for others more generously. It is more of a politics of intention: one is expected to owe allegiance to nonviolence via a willingness to care for others in thought, speech, and action.

[Tanmoy] as suggested earlier the notion of the politics of intention here needs more discussion in the context of a disabled person who may not be the primary care giver but is willing to be one.

Whether or not nakedness, androgyny, and leprosy are disabilities as such is not important. They may become one, and slip the category, depending upon historical contexts. However, what may concern disability studies are nuances of a care ethic that such sites of vulnerability seem to propagate from within a Gandhian framework of nonviolence. First, the field may incorporate Gandhi's tactic of transcendence. An impasse involving a structural entanglement, for example, needs an entirely new approach, and not the ones that emanate from a current status quo. Second, disability studies can take on board Gandhi's politics of intention. Intentions shape an individual's immersion into, and a collisional course concerning an aversive structure. Third, Gandhi's view that corporeal vulnerability is an ideal site for a review of care ethics is in fact a selling point for disability studies. With a special insight into Gandhian care ethics, disability studies can place itself in the lead among fields that concern nonviolence and peacebuilding. And fourth, in doing so, disability studies may also take into consideration Gandhi's approaches to spirituality. Apparently, most of them are esoteric to his time and life. However, his spiritual approaches that concern a selfhood of accommodation may be useful to disability studies in evolving an inclusive normative agenda.

[Tanmoy] Finally, inclusion appears right at the end!

[Sharmishthaa] I really think it's a forced connection from accommodation to inclusion. Although in the conclusion, Prof. Hem has tried to solve the problem of the placement of 'disability' amongst the chosen corporeal vulnerabilities by suggesting to see beyond the historical context; but the question remains, that since leprosy during that time was not considered a disability and the fact that it was considered as a disease, a punishment by the divinity, sympathetically reading Gandhi, he could not have had any other way to deal with it, but as sympathy and pity. Thus his idea of accommodation is also coming from the notion of sympathy and pity and not acceptance or inclusion.

Gandhi's interaction with the vulnerable bodies in my opinion is an example of his political messaging through his social involvements which has been emphasised by many a scholars. So seeing Gandhi and his experiments without the historical context is not an option.

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The Beauty of Patterns:
A review of *Five Poems* by Tito Rajarshi Mukhopadhyay

What purpose does poetry serve in life? Is it just a medium to express your inner desires, your thoughts and reflections? Or is it a lyrical accounting of life's additions and subtractions? Maybe it's just a diary where you record everything you observe in words and wish that they would turn into images when you would revisit them. Poetry can mean so many things to different people.

What happens when you are reading poems written by a person with disability, more specifically a learning disability? Do you look for breadcrumbs that paint a picture of the poet's disability or how he has overcome it? Should poetry by a person with disability to be primarily about disability? How representational it is of disabled lives even when the poet is not talking about disability? This review will try to reflect on all these questions through the poetry of Tito Rajarshi Mukhopadhyay.

Tito was born with Autism. He is tagged as someone with severe or low functioning autism. (Savarese, 2010). His severe autism would not have been as important if we lived in a world where people on the spectrum were treated with respect. Perhaps a place where their ideas were valued and accepted. But we are not living in that world. The world where we live in constantly questions and humiliates persons with learning disabilities. Your intelligence and ability are always in question. Tito's autism, therefore, acquires a central role in his introduction as a poet.

Tito shifted to America when he was thirteen with his mother (Savarese, 2010). Since the contrived formal educational system seldom has the space for abilities that do not fit into typical tabulations, Tito was home schooled throughout his life. Home was an important space in his life as well as in his poetry, although one is always hesitant about romanticising it. For persons with disabilities, the feeling of being at home can sometimes turn into the feeling of being trapped.

Tito's mother, Soma Mukhopadhyay happens to be an educator. She developed something called 'Rapid Prompting Method' (Mukhopadhyay, 2012), which remains scientifically unproven (OAR, 2012), although it has been used by big technology companies. These companies have henceforth made claims on their product being more accessible for persons with learning disabilities (Montague, 2018). This method was apparently used to teach Tito and gained quite a lot of media attention in the US. One is tempted to ask more questions about the technicalities involved, even if the scope of this review is to try and peek into his world of words.

What can be said conclusively is that his mother's teaching had a considerable impact on his ability to learn and write. As he says in an interview to Ralph James Savarese, the then editor of Disability Studies Quarterly (DSQ):

> "I think I began to write because I was introduced to literature very early in life. By the time I was six years old, mother had read aloud to me *Treasure Island* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* along with parallel literature in Bengali and Hindi. As I grew older, mother would ask me if it was "me" who was the author of the fiction she just read and, if so, how I would have ended that story. There was a discipline around my "home school." Even after teaching a science lesson on "Atoms" or "Blood Cells," I had to discuss the lesson with passages like "If I were a Proton…" or "If I were a Blood Platelet…" and not mere questions. Perhaps I adopted writing from that discipline. Or perhaps from something more than that. Who knows? It just makes me wonder. Today I write to get published" (Savarese, 2010).

Tito's work has grown over the years. Apart from his two poetry collections, he has also written one short shorty collection and two biographical/non-fiction books over the years. These books not only bring out the varied nature of his work but also give voice to a perspective which has been missing from mainstream and even disability literature. Most books on autism that one comes across in the mainstream literature have been written by either caretakers, tutors or educators. Tito's writing stands out because of the embodied experiences of his life and how that is crafted into a world of words.

When asked about where he learned his poetry from, in the same interview published in DSQ, he explains, "Who knows from where I learnt it? But one thing is for sure: I was exposed to poems very early on in my life. Mother recites, and used to recite, poems in Bengali, Hindi and English languages. I by-hearted most of them because I appreciated the sound pattern. Maybe I felt that my words would sound something like that. Or maybe I did it unintentionally without any kind of care" (Savarese, 2010).

Tito's first collection of poems is titled *I'm Not a Poet But I Write Poetry: Poems from my autistic poetry*. A rather modest title for a poetry collection, it also reminds us of the disclaimers persons with disability often have to put while talking about their abilities. Nonetheless, the title itself puts his disability at the centre. A lived reality. An autistic mind where his words originate from. These words are not different from the words that originate from other minds but the process of how they take shape might have been different.

To delve deeper into how Tito's autistic mind crafts poetry, we will look at five of his poems published in Disability Studies Quarterly (Mukhopadhay, 2010)[1]. These five poems published here were the result of his interactions with the editor of DSQ Ralph James Savarese. It was through these interactions; he learned about some traditional forms of poetry and went on to craft his old material into these forms. The poems consist of one free verse poem, three villanelles and one sestina.

§1

A Simple Cup

Routine. Repetition. Pattern. This resonates with the reader in his free verse poem *A simple cup*; something that occurs again and again. For some people routine can be boring. But Tito finds beauty in this routine. The poem immediately creates a very visual image in your head and transports you to Tito's kitchen, where you find yourself with the smiling cup, the food that is being prepared and Tito's observant eyes:

> *It lived on the kitchen shelf*
> *like a smile,*
> *watching all the food preparation*
> *from the kitchen shelf.*

It also reminds you of how much time Tito had to spent in that kitchen, observing her mother or caretaker perform daily rituals of domestic life.

Tito sees the pattern. "The filling in, the emptying out." But his gaze can also see go beyond the pattern. "some patches of colours—/ orange and yellow, / randomly marked/ here and there." He sketches the randomness of life through his words and fills it with colours, like a painting. The cup acquires its own personhood as the poem borrows hints of magic realism. The cup is fed only tea. It's yellow and orange stains turn into a smile. A smile that intrigues the poet and then wins his heart.

You start to wonder if the poet sees a reflection of his life in the cup. Sitting on the shelf. Smiling. Finding little joys in daily routine. Even if he doesn't see his reflection in the cup, the cup attains importance in his life. The smiling cup becomes part of his memories and taking a cue from it, the poet starts filling and emptying his own cup, his cup of memories with stories.

Memories play an important role in our lives. They shape who we are and what we want to be. Some memories grow within us as we grow old. Others wither away. Memories that stay with us are not necessarily happy or sad. Sometimes they are just banal memories that are stuck in our head. A home, a kitchen, a cup. To stop memories from fading away, we keep memories alive by sowing them with stories. When memories become too heavy, we fill it

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[1] The full texts of all the five poems can be found at: https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/1192/1256; here, in the review only relevant excerpts will be quoted.

with a different story, or replace it with something different, something that might help us in keeping away trauma or pain.

In this poem, Tito talks about a similar process, where he fills and empties his cup of memories with stories. No one can do more justice to stories about his life than the poet himself. And thus, he takes up the responsibility of a storyteller, where all his lived memories become part of his stories, his poems, and his art. It also reminds you of the greater human experience, where one has to fill existence with memories and stories in order to find a purpose and may be a smile.

The poem provides a glimpse into Tito's life. It would be unjust to define it only through the routes of disability or autism. His words take a hold on you. Their lyrical beauty wins you over at times. When he says things like "And ever since then, / at a moment called When,", you see the quality of the craft. But then, it would be also unfair to completely leave disability out of it. There are so many persons across disabilities who spend their lives at home, sitting in the kitchen as the daily chores are done. They can't find the right schools. They don't have access to caretakers. They can't go out on their own. Therefore, they create their stories from whatever life has to offer. Tito's poem speaks out for many of those voices.

§2

Those Birds

The second poem, *Those Birds*, the first of the three villanelles is well crafted and paints a picture for the audiences. The villanelle is a highly structured poem made up of five tercets followed by a quatrain, with two repeating rhymes and two refrains. (Poets.org, Glossary, n.d.)

The first and third lines of the opening tercet are repeated alternately in the last lines of the succeeding stanzas; then in the final stanza, the refrain serves as the poem's two concluding lines. Using capitals for the refrains and lowercase letters for the rhymes, the form could be expressed as: A1 b A2 / a b A1 / a b A2 / a b A1 / a b A2 / a b A1 A2 (Poets.org, Glossary, n.d.).

These highly structured poems evolved from previous poems after Tito had discussions about poetic forms with the editor of DSQ. This interaction, mentioned in the piece where these five poems were published, displays Tito's grip over his craft and his willingness to learn new things.

In one way, the highly structured form of villanelle which is full of patterns is something that was waiting to be discovered. However, it is not just patterns that the poet's mind is drawn in. A villanelle is by no means an easy form to successfully construct. To put the images in a particular format takes craft of poetry writing that seems to come naturally to Tito.

Coming to the poem itself, the first stanza constructs a clear visual for readers:

> *Those birds, three and thirty-five,*

Sat on electric cables
Beneath a cloudy sky,
Chirping day and night.

In that sense, Tito's poems are very visual. You can visualize birds sitting on an electric cable. Three and Thirty-Five. The words leave an impact on you. The birds speak to Tito through their structures. He sees them making a pattern on the cable. Three and Thirty-Five. Their little shapes and little size/ Formed calligraphy on the wires— / A cursive "three and thirty-five"!

Our minds are all different. By finding patterns in these birds, Tito highlights not only the beautiful patterns present in nature but also underlines his imagination, his ability to see them which makes his mind a beautiful one. You can almost imagine a pattern on the cable wire. Three birds sitting together and sitting apart from them a group of thirty-five birds. Why were the three sitting away from the group? Were they different? The poem makes you wonder.

Like the first poem, where the cup from the kitchen is part of his daily life, one gets the impression that the birds too visit outside his window on a regular basis and hang out on the electric cables outside his window. One gets the impression that they are far above, as their shapes seem tiny and everyone has to look up to them.

The cloudy sky forms the background for the birds. He tries to garner their attention with little success. Maybe because they are far away. The sky is rainless for now and there is a light breeze blowing.

From where he looks at them, the birds seem small and on the electric cable they seem like calligraphy. As stated above, the cursive calligraphy is trying to say something or paint something but what they are saying or painting, isn't clear. After failing to decipher the meaning of the patterns they make, the poet tries to decipher the conversation that words are having. Although he is not able to make sense of what they are saying, he is sure that they are more words than just "three and thirty-five". The cable wires cross each other, and Tito sees a pattern there too, "Checks and stripes", he notes. In this visual portrait, the birds are at the centre of the world, and everything else around them is just trying to facilitate their story. The trees, the wires, and the clouds.

While the poet's ability to find beautiful patterns and create beautiful imagery with it is remarkable, to assimilate them into a poem which is full of verbal patterns add the complexity of the poem. The image of the birds hanging out on the cable wires on a cloudy day stays with you long after the poem has ended. It reveals the beauty and potential of an artist who can't be defined only in terms of his disability. His worldview is equally important. His voice as a poet is equally enriching. There are so many voices that remain unheard because those voices can't reach beyond the four walls of the house or pages of a personal diary. Tito's voice is not one of them.

§3

The Sunset Hour

What happens when the repetition of style accompanies repetition of images? If I had read the villanelle *The sunset hour* in isolation I might have been more impressed by its poetic quality. But since I read it immediately after *Those Birds*, a villanelle with similar images I was perhaps not as impressed by the poem as I should have been. Or so I thought.

The poem takes us back to the birds, to wires. It's cloudy. The sun is sinking or setting. There is a purple tinge in the sky. The sun looks scrambled because of the clouds in the west. Everything seems scrambled. The cars, the city. People rushing towards their homes. Sunset brings chaos in the world that the poet envisions through this poem. Although similar in style and imagery, this poem has a different emotional tone than the last one.

Tito is painting a picture of everything around him with his imagination. Guessing what the birds are chatting about. Perhaps their homes. He is imagining the rush in downtown. Street pavements are full of people. Cars are caught in traffic. Scrambled like the sun. A scrambling world under a purple sky. The sun is about to leave. Tito can sense the chaos that evening brings. There is uncertainty. It isn't clear if he likes the chaos. There are small hints that it fills him with tension. The sun disappears into the purple sky. People disappear on purple pavements.

Nothing represents change like the evening sky and the city that churns under it. The patterns disappear and the sun no longer assures us with its presence. Afternoon to evening, evening to night. Office to home. Work to rest or vice versa. Tito tries to capture this change through beautiful shades of purple. And scrambled imperfections of everything around him. Perhaps he is talking about his own imperfections. Perhaps he is trying to show how chaotic the process of change is, and the same chaos emerges within him when patterns around him change. Living in an ever-changing world must be different for someone trying to make sense in the patterns that emerge. Specially with all the chaos that comes with change. But then one is perhaps reading far too much into the poem then the poet intends us to. However, the repetition this time through a recurring colour, purple, over and under, and recurring process of scramble everywhere, give us a peep into the poet's mind picking up the effect of scrambling and the dominance of the purple colour.

And of course, it is a poetic masterstroke to realise the rhyming of scramble and purple. And this is what remain with the reader, conspiring almost to create a concept that undergoes scrambling and is purple. Poetic.

§4

Misfit

There seems to be a camera panning out as we delve into the fourth poem. First it was the kitchen, then the cable outside, then the city and now the earth. And this is also symbolic of what Tito has to say in this fourth poem.

This poem is an assertion. An assertion of his autistic identity. His personhood. There is nothing 'wrong' with anything. The earth went about its morning routine, turning on its axis, the stars receded, birds went about flying. His hands were flapping. And none of them found anything 'wrong' with it.

Flapping. Flapping not like a bird. Flapping. Filled with panic and anxiety. How does it feel to be in panic and anxiety much of the time? What if it is a part of who you are? As Tito shows us, accepting oneself is the best way forward. But will the world understand this? Will the world be equally accepting? Perhaps not, as "Men and women stared at my nodding/ They labelled me a Misfit", not the birds, but the men and women around him.

People with disabilities, including those with learning disabilities are often targeted by the society. They are tagged as 'different', 'wrong', 'special'. Their abilities are questioned. Anything away from the normative is considered wrong. And that is something that Tito questions in this poem. Tito points out that without even knowing who he is, men and women notice his flapping and tag him as a misfit. A misfit who is turning and turning. He tries to draw a parallel between the earth's turning and his own, a routine, a pattern that is part of their life. His nervousness, his anxiety is part of his routine, part of who he is and yet, he is labelled as a misfit for who he is.

Through this poem, Tito replies to those questioning eyes, those pointing fingers who think he is a misfit. He is speaking for himself but also for other persons with disabilities who go through the same questioning and tagging. He declares in the last paragraph. "Somewhere a wish was rising, /Perhaps from between my laughing lips. /Why stop turning and turning/ When right can be found with everything?"

These lines represent the long-drawn battle persons with disabilities have had to fight within their own families and societies to establish their bodies, their minds, their behaviour as nothing divergent or abnormal but their own unique signature of living life. We are all different. Everyone has quirks. Everyone has a different body. Tito questions why some bodies are more different from others.

What makes a body 'fit' in society? Is it their normativity, their productivity, their acceptance? Who gets to decide these things? Tito raises all these questions by asserting his identity. And without mentioning raises it for others too. Not only persons with disabilities, but transgender people, queer people, people that are too fat or too thin. And the definition of who is a misfit also keeps changing with time.

Despite the assertion though, even Tito can't deny the mental toll such a labelling takes on you. When people stare at you, you just want to run away. And then he was the wind, blowing. But since the society does not seem to be changing their ideals of who is considered normal anytime soon, the best way to move forward is to accept your identity. As Tito declares, almost emphatically "Why stop turning and turning/ When right can be found with everything?"

The poet takes several poetic liberties along the way to keep the sanctity of the structure. And maybe because the poem is less about visuals and more about the point he is making, one can ignore paying too much of an attention to structured imagery as compared to the previous poems. Finally, this is a poem where he is speaking out for himself, his identity as an autistic person and as someone who is continuously looked at like a misfit by society. One can see his anger with others and his attempt at self-love. Art is beautiful when it's personal. Art is beautiful when it's political. This poem is both personal and political. And probably that's why, memorable.

§5

Boys in a City Slum

The fifth poem *The Boys in a City Slum* is a sestina that is a complex, thirty-nine-line poem featuring the intricate repetition of end-words in six stanzas and an envoi. The sestina follows a strict pattern of the repetition of the initial six end-words of the first stanza through the remaining five six-line stanzas, culminating in a three-line envoi. (Poets.org, Glossary, n.d.)

In this fifth poem, Tito's experiment with structure continues, as he constructs this highly complex and mature poem. But what becomes the centre of my attention is not the craft but the subject matter of the poem. Here, the poet seems to use his power of empathy and reach out to the stories of others. Others, who are less privileged than him in many ways. It also seems an exercise in memory recreation since the slum painted in the poetry seems like a place he would have encountered in India, a country he left at the age of thirteen.

How deep or real was this interaction is difficult to say. This poem brings out the limitations of telling a story which are not made up of lived experiences. While in the rest of the poems, Tito is clearly trying to show something, create a visual through his words, in this poem Tito 'tells more than he shows'.

It tries to paint a picture of slums, of hunger, of homelessness, of little boys with no one to take care of them. But it does it from such a distance that everything is made to look gloomy. In this portrayal of a slum, you are almost reminded of ill researched articles on India which is based on the projected idea of a slum rather than what it stands for.

A city slum also stands as an epitome for the will of the people to survive. It stands for rebellion. It stands for people using their skills to make a living. Within all the gloominess, there is always hope and happiness, like anywhere else. It seems that the picture in Tito's head is very monochromatic.

The idea of dogs continuously chasing boys, chasing them away almost also seems to stem from the poet's own fears. Dogs also become friends of boys from the slums who feed them leftover food. There are alternative imaginations available. But since there is so much that the poet is trying to tell us, almost presenting them as facts, it becomes hard to imagine things sometimes.

However, the fact that the poet reaches out and turns his empathy into words makes it clear that it is also a political statement against inequality, deprivation and the othering of the poor in the cities.

The poem almost seems to embark on a dystopic journey at times. 'Food sometimes appeared in the city/ In begging bowls coloured with dust'. This picture of helpless, begging city children somehow takes a grip over this poem. It is true that the best kind of poetry of this type comes from lived experiences, but the poet here is successful in showing us a control over expressions that reach out and touch the lives of others.

Conclusion

These five poems by Tito Rajarshi Mukhopadhyay give us a glimpse into the talented poet's craft and his life. His use of diverse poetic forms to build visual images of words for the readers, the rhythm of his poetry, their layered construct, all make his poetry memorable and noteworthy.

Poetry carries the reflection of the poet. Tito's poetry finds meaning in patterns and assimilates into the patterns of his own life. Through his words, we travel through spaces which he occupies, and which find a space into his head. A stained teacup, a group of birds on electric cables, the scrambled sun, the purple sky, the hungry boys on the street. These varied images highlight the depth of his imagination and his ability to capture them in words.

Through his poetry, he is reclaiming space. He is questioning the society for deeming him 'unfit' because of his autism. He relates more to nature, the sun, the birds, and even the inanimate than people who stare at him questioningly. In fact, Tito's poetry breaks more rules of the normative society directly or indirectly, destroying all the questions on ability that is often posed for persons with disabilities.

His disability in no way becomes an impediment in his writing. In fact, as he shows through his villanelles, when he finds a form that matches the rhythm in his head, words and images seem to complement each other. Repetition and patterns become part of his craft and reflect the beauty of his mind.

I found the third poem to be visually similar to the second one, although it is still a well-crafted poem. The last poem seems to be written for an audience for whom poverty and hunger has a stereotypical image, the one that promotes the idea of giving and to be fair Tito does justice to that. But as someone who shows immense depth while examining the self and the world around him, one starts to expect him to display the same insight when he reaches out. However, Tito is a poet first and foremost, and here in this poem he is showing us his dexterity with a complex form.

Tito's body of work at this young age is remarkable. It is also extremely valuable as far as representation of persons of autism is concerned. As a person with severe autism, Tito breaks many barriers by not only writing well but by also telling his stories, the stories of his body and mind, a narrative that has been missing from much of the discourse on autism especially in India. Most narratives on Autism in India are by parents or caretakers, leaving a void for embodied experiences. Tito's work might inspire people not only to write but to speak about their experiences through not only poetry but different forms of art.

Disability art is sometimes considered a sub - category of art where everything is looked at in the context of disability. That sometimes does injustice to the work of the artist. Tito's layered, visual and beautifully crafted poems do not deserve to be side lined as work written in some sub-category of poetry. Instead it should be celebrated by all lovers of poetry as an important body of work, something that stands out all by itself and yet lends a richness that 'fits' into any discourse on autism and disability.

Abhishek Anicca

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Reviews

Ghai, Anita (ed.) (2018). *Disability in South Asia: Knowledge and Experiences*, Sage Publishing India, 492 pages, ISBN 9352807081, 9789352807086.

The scholarship in disability studies, akin to its global feature, is growing eclectic in the South Asian context. Disability studies scholarship in South Asia has gained immensely from the contributions of Anita Ghai, the editor of this volume. Her Hypatia article in 2002 'Disabled women: An Excluded Agenda of Indian Feminism'[1], followed by her first book *(Dis)embodied form: issues of disabled women*[2] in 2003, had stoked a fire in the academic circles, and research on disability from India with a disability studies perspective came to be taken seriously. Since then, disability studies in India attracted attention from across the fields, from history to law and literature to sociology and several scholars have been actively engaged in empirical research and publication. It is also important to note that the research and activism on disability are coevolving, benefitting a large section of persons with disabilities by influencing policymaking.

In the book under review, *Disability in South Asia: Knowledge and Experience* (DSA), Ghai asserts that this 'volume brings multiplicities from various scholars in the newly emerging field of disability studies' (p. xix). Ghai, who has been strongly arguing for the development of disability studies in the Indian academia, through this volume, presents the case for disability studies in India strongly. Quoting Addlakha, Ghai suggests that 'there is a need for expanding the limited scholarship in disability studies in India to capture the heterogeneous and multi-faceted nature of the disability from various disciplinary and cross-disciplinary standpoints, socio-cultural contexts and lived experiences of people with disabilities' (p. xxi). The volume includes papers by scholars who have been researching and publishing widely on disability in India and South Asia. She finds that 'the absence of disability from the mainstream academia creates and maintains a status quo where the 'disabled' are incorporated within the existing social patterns as "problems". And hence, she states that 'the present attempt is to foreground how the inclusion of disability studies as a field of inquiry within mainstream academia can enrich scholarship and contribute to the understanding of the heterogeneity of disability' (p. xxiii).

The volume is developed around six themes covering an array of issues ranging from theoretical perspectives on disability, body, care, sexuality, self to the fields of literature, culture studies and law. The apparent aim of the volume is to portray disability as an epistemology, which the editor of the volume achieves through the selective inclusion of papers.

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[1] Ghai, A. (2002). Disabled Women: An Excluded Agenda of Indian Feminism. *Hypatia*, 17(3), 49-66.

[2] Ghai, A. (2003). *(Dis)embodied form: issues of disabled women*. New Delhi: Shakti Books.

Ghai argues that the history of persons with disabilities is the history of silence. She also asserts that the historical studies have always remained dichotomous, 'us' versus 'them', which reflects the marginalisation within the academia. Ghai suggests that 'apolitical stance of academia contains an implicit political ideology; and silence or denial of their involvement is no less a political act than explicit political action' (p. xix). She argues that disability studies must focus on studying the process of alterity as expressed in the terms of othering, exclusion, etc. Observing resistance to disability studies within the universities, Ghai exhorts for serious debate on disability which is possible by taking the cause of disability studies to the research programmes in the universities.

Five papers included under the first theme 'Historical and theoretical perspectives' deal with disability rights movement and disability studies. Tracing the origins of the disability movement in India, Jagdish Chander presents the struggle and activism of the visually impaired. He highlights how the 'disability movement began to shift from an initiative of blind activists to a cross-disability effort' (p. 12). The paper brings out the political pressure by the disability activists in influencing the legislation for the disabled. Using the combined methodology of content, event and historical analysis Meenu Bhambhani looks at disability movement in India. She argues that the disability rights movement in India led by self-advocacy groups which emerged after the passage of the Persons with Disabilities Act (PWD) in 1995 vigorously pursued under the ideological framework of 'Nothing About Us Without Us'. She contests the claims of the Western scholars and argues for securing a strong position for disability movement in India among a 'throng of protests'. Fiona Kumari Campbell problematises ableism in her paper titled 'A Refocus and Paradigm Shift: From Disability to Studies in Ableism' and explores the epistemologies and ontologies of ableism critically. She argues that the concept of disability in the ableism discourse 'upsets the modernist craving for ontological security' (p. 51) for the reason that 'disabled bodies are effectively positioned in the nether regions of 'unthought' (p. 52). In the paper on Rawlsian Framework of Justice, Deepa Palaniappan and Valerian Rodrigues attempt to understand how disability is defined and perceived within a justice paradigm. They analyse John Rawls' theory of justice and suggest that the Rawlsian framework is 'valid for contemporary disability movement' (p. 72). Tanmoy Bhattacharya strongly argues for bringing recognition to the field of disability studies and saving it from 'being pushed towards ossification in the form of library archives' (p. 76). Viewing disability studies as resistance, Bhattacharya claims that disability activism shouldn't be solely pursued to achieve services rather must strive towards a strong disability studies programme. He contends that advances in disability studies helped in revising the goals and approaches of the service providers in the country and argues for epistemological inversion to problematise ableism and to 'reconceptualise disability studies through the lens of disability justice' (p. 96).

The second theme of the volume on body, care and sexuality contests the materiality of the body. Nandini Ghosh in her paper on 'Experiencing the Body: Femininity, Sexuality and Disabled Women in India' explores the socially engineered environments embedded in the patriarchal power and gaze and the socio-cultural constructions of ideal women body. Using empirical case studies Ghosh analyses how disabled girls accept and negotiate normative femininity. In the next paper, 'Shifting and vulnerable terrains of South Asian crip queering: Encounters with localised epistemologies of gender/disability/sexuality' Janet Price and Niluka Gunawardena attempt to build a disability-sexuality epistemological framework through an investigation on regional narratives of disability and sexuality to analyse local manifestations. The authors discuss the disability-sexuality epistemologies of McRuer, which are based in Europe, under the rubric of Northern movements, and present the analysis on southern epistemologies. The southern movements narrative by the authors appears to be heavily based on a singular source of literature without bothering to verify the accounts presented. Colonial perspective is apparent in the article and the authors do not hesitate to dwell on politically sensitive issues which serve very little to the academic discourse on disability in South Asia. A statement such as: 'as globalisation and urbanisation lead to changes in the rural constituency with land being expropriated for mining, forest and other industries, as villages drain of young men and women and are shorn of those who will make them co-productive, who will help them grow both in population and in wealth, only old people, children and those with disabilities remain, the struggle for survival harshens with rural production outsourced to industry' (p. 137), suggests lack of reflexivity. The major limitation of the paper is that it seldom focused on other nations than India in South Asia. The authors take strong political positions as regards the southern epistemologies while presenting an apolitical discourse on northern movements. In the paper on ethics and practice of care concerning persons with disabilities, Upali Chakravarti argues that the ideal model of a family with the woman as carer and man as the provider has become the nub of the problems with relation to care for the persons with disabilities. She claims that for most women caring has become a triple burden: child-rearing, housework and wage labour. In this paper discussing the disability critique of care, Chakravarti highlights the power relations between the carer and the persons with disabilities. She argues that the institutionalisation of caregiving for the persons with disabilities is not only pathologising disability but also oppressive while the need is for enabling independent living for the PWDs.

Presenting the third theme of the volume 'Knowing the Self and Writing Life' Ghai argues that 'engaging with the memories of self and others is critical to understanding disability as cultural discourses' (p. xxx). Under the theme, five papers are included which consider 'autobiography as a tool to highlight personal experience'. Nidhi Goyal in her paper questions the politics of agency and representation within disability rights movements, the perception of disability as a category of structural inequality by members of other marginalised social groups and the way gender intersects with disability in specific contexts of South Asia. In this paper Nidhi Goyal presents her journey into the world of disability, the choices she made afterwards and the journey into the world of women and disabled activism. She dwells upon the intersectionality of the women's rights movement with disabled, marginalised, Muslim identities and, most importantly, she brings out the subtleties of these rights movements vis-à-vis disabled women. She presents her experiences as a woman with disability within the rights activism under several identities and asserts that the normal majoritarianist tendencies are all pervasive. Narrating lived reality, Nidhi Goyal points out the perplexities with the intersectionality of identities which place her at the cusp of movements.

Sameer Chaturvedi in the paper titled 'Journey so far: My Life with an impairment' presents a personal narrative highlighting the social and institutional idiosyncrasies both within the family and in the wider social context. The paper puts forth the psycho-social yearnings of a student with disability passionately. Asha Singh, in the next paper, presents the journey of a mother and her atypical child through the process of socialisation norms. Located in the school site. the paper highlights the challenges for parents and atypical children in negotiating social constructions of ability. The paper by Sandeep Singh titled 'Life-writing and Disabled Self in the Works of Oliver W. Sacks' critically explores the subjectivisation of disabled in the life-writing method. Presenting a historical account of the emergence of disability scholarship, Sandeep suggests that life writings enabled the scholarship to move into the disciplines of humanities and liberal arts. The paper particularly focuses on the works of Oliver Sacks to put across the immense contribution these works made to the disability activism, identity and scholarship. Hemachandran Karah's paper on blind culture and cosmologies deals with the autobiography of Ved Mehta, particularly the title 'Continents of Exile', a compendium of 11 books. The 'autobiographical recollections, standpoints, political commentaries, and raw imprints of personhood' (p. 227) of Ved Mehta are presented by Hemachandran to benefit the readers on the narrative of overcoming.

The fourth theme of the volume dwells upon disability in literature and culture. In her paper 'Disability and Diversity Across Cultures', Shubhangi Vaidya, using the concept of 'biosocialities', analyses the formation of disabled solidarities and communities with reference to Deaf Pride and Autistic neurodiversity in the age of globalisation and digital networking. It explores the concept of disability through the lens of culture. Vaidya considers that culture also encompasses the dimensions of power and control, which influence the culture of normal or what is called as normative. The paper discusses disability across cultures and informs the readers about the emergence of disability culture. In the paper titled 'Corporeality and Culture' Shilpaa Anand discusses the emergence of normative ideas of corporeality through a detailed discussion on 'treatment' and 'corporeal difference' in the Western and Asian contexts. She suggests that disability as a concept is construed under different epistemic conditions influenced by social, geographic and cultural contexts. Someshwar Sati, in his paper on 'Corporeal Difference in the Post-colonial Indian English Novel' critically examines the representation of disability in the novels: Anita Desai's Clear Light of Day (1980), Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children (1981), Firdaus Kanga's Trying to Grow (1990), and Indra Sinha's Animal's People (2007). This paper has sought to draw attention to the various complex representations of disability, both conservative and progressive, in the postcolonial Indian English Novels and make a case for culturally specific readings of disability to stimulate and facilitate further research in the area. Santosh Kumar critically analyses the role of metaphor in the construction of disability through his paper on 'Materiality as Metaphor' in Jataka Kathas of 'Four Blind men and Elephant' in the Indian Context. He argues that 'the equation between the nature of truth and trope of blindness remains the same in all versions of this parable' (p. 297) and suggests that 'continuous contemporary ubiquity' (p. 300) of the parable becomes problematic. The author presents the arguments most systematically and methodically.

Shridevi Rao's paper under the fifth theme of the volume 'Discourses of Education and Employment in Disability Studies' focuses on local epistemologies on disability. Her work focuses on how families use the collective identity of a family to resist pressures to feel 'shame' and relent to the pejorative identities imposed on their child. Findings of her empirical work indicate that while the pressure to experience shame exists, not all families succumb to it. Ankur Madan explores the issue of the education of children with disabilities from the standpoint of inclusive education. She argues that inclusive education becomes a hard concept to promote in a mainstream education programme and observes that there are hardly any resources. The author presents her findings on inclusive education through an empirical study in a school in Bengaluru city which embraced inclusive education almost three decades ago. Based on these findings she suggests three important components for inclusive education, namely; readiness, adequate pedagogic skills to teachers, and cooperation and communication among different stakeholders. Suchaita Tenneti's paper attempts to analyse the structural matrix in the education system which impede the researchers to 'understand the tenacity of structures of ableism' (p. 350) and normalcy. The paper discusses Linda Ware's work titled 'Many Possible Futures, Many Different Directions: Merging Critical Special Education and Disability Studies' at length along with other scholars' works on special education while emphasising teacher agency. On the media representations and disability at work, Arun Kumar and Nivedita critically look at the print media for its representation of disability, particularly in the news on corporate sector efforts in employing persons with disabilities. The authors argue that in the neoliberalist market economy 'rights of persons with disabilities are reformulated as privileges to be earned in exchange of performance of key responsibilities, the most significantly through economic contribution' (p. 373).

The sixth theme of the volume is devoted to the discussion on legal discourses of disability in India. Amita Dhanda's paper in this section provides the finer details of the process in the legal discourse. The author, a prominent activist and a member of advocacy groups working for the rights of persons with disabilities presents a critical analysis of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). She argues that CRPD is a watershed in the legal discourse on disability as the lawmaking began to be made from a disability studies perspective. The second part of the paper details the process that preceded the enactment of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 and the Mental Health Care Act of 2017 which is important learning for all to know how the democratisation of lawmaking takes place. She suggests that disability studies approach to lawmaking could be used by all citizens to challenge state monopoly in lawmaking. Rukmini Sen in her paper on kinship in disability specific domesticity, discusses the legal aspects of care for persons with disabilities and explains how care entered into the legal landscape, particularly with reference to the PWD Act 2016. She presents the important dimension of care i.e. the economy of care in the neoliberal economy and the entanglement of care in the kinship matrix. The author discusses the importance of formalisation of caring and discusses the nuances on perceptions like altruism. She argues for the coexistence of both justice and care instead of looking at them as just binaries.

The last theme of the volume is on constructing disability as diversity. Shanti Auluck, based on her personal experiences with persons with intellectual and other disabilities, puts forth the argument that disability must be seen as a form of human diversity. The last paper of the volume is provided by Anita Ghai who presents a different voice on disability and diversity. The paper, placed at the end of the volume, provides a summary account of what the papers have presented so far. She locates the arguments on diversity in the neoliberal market situation and wider social context, and suggests that though 'diversity works as a manoeuvre in neoliberal political and economic markets that work to ratify the status quo through "feel good" politics' but also cautions scholars that 'this move from disability to diversity is a difficult terrain' (p. 428).

This volume is a contribution to the field of disability studies in South Asia. It, for sure, will help in closing the epistemic ignorance gap in academia. Anita Ghai's vision of evolving an epistemology of disability and development of disability studies in the universities to rectify misinterpretations of disability is well reflected in the volume.

C. Raghava Reddy

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REVIEWS

Mehrotra, Nilika (ed.) (2020). *Disability Studies in India: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Springer, pp. 324 (eBook: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-2616-9).

The Inauguration of a burgeoning discourse

The fine print readily supplied to us in published pages often has a resonating story outside its pages and precedent to its print. Nilika Mehrotra's edited volume *Disability Studies in India: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* typifies such a resonating origin. As we are told right in the preface, the edited volume is the culmination of proceedings of a conference 'Disability study in India: Reflections on Future', held at the Centre for the Study of Social Systems (CSSS), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), back in 2015. However, the foundations for the thoughts found in the volume can actually be traced back to a similar conference held sometime in 2011 at CSSS, JNU, organised by Mehrotra. As one looks back now, one notices without fail the forethought of the deliberations then, in that the conference saw exactly what was to come a decade down the line. The theme of the deliberations at that time was 'Disability studies in India: challenges and possibilities for social science research', extended further in the 2015 conference. *Disability studies in India*, henceforth, is the work of a decade that reflects many changes and continuities of disability discourse in the Indian subcontinent.

The book is divided into three parts, each representing a distinct theme relevant not only for disability studies in the Indian context, but also for an interdisciplinary discourse across the board. The first part, 'Epistemologies and Representations', has chapters that touch upon the topics ranging from 'decolonising disability discourse' to 'strategies of teaching disability'. In between this vast expanse lie the chapters that uncover conceptions of "disability and difference", "public spaces and universal design" and "ignorance and epistemologies".

The second part dealing with 'policy and institutionalisation' carries chapters that bring to fore the issues of "Service and knowledge", "Disability education", "disability and social work education", "Disability and legal Accademia", and the "Institutionalisation of the idea of disability". Part 3 of the volume sets out to examine the interface between 'academia – activism and Enabling Practices' has chapters on the emancipatory potential of disability studies, the genesis of disability studies in the University of Delhi, the right to work for persons with disabilities, field notes on encounters with persons with disabilities, deaf education, and accessibility of field sites for visually disabled.

As one can gauge from the broad outline mentioned above, the volume covers a wide range of conceptual issues, policy matters and experiential concerns. Each chapter in the book is a theme in itself, potentially informing the readers of a distinct field of research within the disability studies discourse. This review is in no way intended to summarise each chapter individually, but to present the flavour of the book as a whole. In the same vein, the discussion herein may not follow the exact chronological order of the book but would try to emphasise the semantic proximity visible across the pages.

To begin with, Nilika Mehrotra's chapter 'Situating Disability Studies: A Prolegomenon' serves as a perfect prelude to the volume. The chapter gives us the exact idea of the book, explains the logic of its layout, tells us about the essence behind its arrangement, and makes a convincing case for its relevance for today. As anyone familiar with the Indian higher education scenario would agree, the academic discourse on disability is closely tied up with the day-to-day concerns, special services and struggles of disabled persons in the university and outside. It is such concerns as accessibility and reasonable accommodation that are pushed harder to the front than academic issues on disability. In fact, it is often exceedingly difficult to make a strict separation between disability services and disability academics. It is, for example, perfectly possible for a disabled student/teacher body to demand for the establishment of a Disability service unit and teaching-cum-research Centre under the same umbrella.

Mehrotra's chapter, like the book itself, is deeply sensitive to the mutual relationship between disability activism and disability academics. The chapter, therefore, begins with the descriptive details of the University Grants Commission (UGC) sponsored enabling units in the institutes of higher education in the country. It then gives us a glimpse into the genealogy of disability discourse, particularly in the last three decades. *The physically handicapped in India: A growing national problem* (1963) by Usha Bhatt is considered to be one of the early texts on disability in India, and Mehrotra's edited volume begins exactly there.

Disability Studies In India has a promise for collating the emerging scholarship on disability across the spectrum through an interdisciplinary approach, documenting "resources and relationships ... in pursuit of knowledge construction and activism for realizing social justice", all this with an explicit agenda to "take the dialogues further and help consolidate the basis for strong disability platforms and disability activism" (p. 20).

One of the strong contentions of the book is its insistence on 'decolonising disability discourse in the global south', and James Staples' chapter, 'Decolonising Disability Studies? Developing South Asia-Specific Approaches to Understanding Disability', calls for an introspection in this regard. Staples is fully aware of the risky terrain his argument walks on, and therefore, asks as to how appropriate the culturally specific approaches are, and as to what extent they might be fruitfully applied without ghettoizing regional disability studies (p. 25). Since the conceptions of disability evolved in a particular western context – the post-World War-II socio-economic political regime – it is important that scholarship in the global South try to shape a model capable of representing culturally embedded experiences. Such an attempt is not just desirable but is highly warranted. The caution, however, is that "one be beware of straightforward links being drawn" between the past practices and present realities, for example the linkages often hastily drawn between the "texts written thousands of years ago and contemporary understandings of disability, which have clearly been shaped by many other things along the way" (p. 36).

So, what we have in Staples' schematic outline is an emphasis on the need for a culturally informed approach to disability studies and a caution against the possible parochialisation in adopting such a locally embedded experiential model. To put it succinctly, Staples has a two-fold argument: first, scholars interested in disability studies scholarship in the Indian subcontinent "need to look inwards", without losing sight of, perhaps with due attention to, "the particular socio-historical, cultural and material conditions that shape the experience of bodily difference for the majority population in the subcontinent"; second, these scholars should also be accommodative enough to allow cross-cultural comparisons without necessarily falling prey to Western assumptions on such wider issues as personhood and human rights (p. 38). Staples considers ethnographic method suitable for such an exercise.

Anita Ghai's chapter on ignorance of disability in Accademia is the perfect continuation to the propositions made by Staples, though it is arranged at a little distance from his chapter in sequence. Ghai, a long-time contact point for academia-activism interface not just for disability discourse but even otherwise, takes the debate to newer heights by bringing to light the subtle practices of "epistemic oppression" (p. 75).

Ignorance about the disabled people and their being in the general social sphere may not be all too surprising, but the ignorance of disability in the system of knowledge production is a concern worth attending to. Clearly identifying herself as a woman with disability in a highly patriarchal, traditional society, Ghai offers self-reflexive glimpses into the ontological struggles of people with disabilities to find a place for themselves in the episteme. But the epistemological structures (academia in this case) have their own struggles within and outside. It is these struggles, along with other prejudices and stereotypes, that act as hindrance for the disability discourse to make a niche for itself in the order of knowledge production and circulation. In a specific elaboration, Ghai explains as to how our long-time obsession with the medical model as a primary lens to view disability becomes a barrier for other disciplines to engage with disability discourse as a discipline in its own right.

As promised right in the title, Ghai's chapter deals substantially with the idea of ignorance, emphasising its active deployment in the epistemological engagements (see p. 83). Drawing inferences from subaltern and indigenous studies, the chapter explicates the subtle ways in which notions of disability are pushed to the margins, thereby simultaneously resorting to disability-ignorance on one hand and facilitating ignorance of disability on the other. This is quite an interesting argument that the scholars of disability studies and interdisciplinary pursuit may not wish to give a miss.

In between these two theoretically important chapters one comes across the nuanced interventions of Shubhangi Vaidya and Shilpa Das. Das re-locates disability in public spaces using universal design as a heuristic tool. Scholars in disability studies and practitioners of disability services all know universal design as a concept encompassing accessibility, reasonable accommodation, and inclusion. It may also not be an overemphasis to state that the seven principles of universal design are now a buzzword for the industry provisioning services and products alike. Thanks to the adoption of the

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) by a large number of countries, universal design is now entering the policy lexicon; the process may be slower than expected but has promising prospects going forward.

Having a general understanding of universal design – which I tried to hint at above – is one thing but taking it up as an interdisciplinary pursuit is another, and this is exactly what Shilpa Das does. Her chapter highlights universal design as a cross disciplinary approach intrinsic to both disability studies and design studies, with equal importance for other sciences, engineering, arts, and humanities. This is certainly an exciting invitation for disability studies to look outward and for other disciplines to see inward, as they all begin interacting with the design studies and research from a universal design approach

Making a case for "(Re)presenting Autism in India", Shubhangi Vaidya examines the notions of 'disorder, disability and difference'. Vaidya's essay is a perfect prelude to academia-advocacy-activism as a strategy for re-learning disability. The chapter deconstructs margins, reorganises formal learning and family experience, day-to-day sociability, and brings community and clinic together in the context of experiences and articulations of autism in India. Vaidya's chapter presents a three-decade history, commentary on current trends, an ethnographic preview, personal reflections and futuristic analysis, all in the context of disability discourse with a focus on autism in India. For anyone interested in Indian disability studies in general and autism essentials in particular, this chapter has instructive lessons and remains a must-read.

The first part of the book that sets out to delineate 'epistemologies' and representations has a concluding chapter by Shilpaa Anand, highlighting teaching disability in humanities and/or history classrooms. Unlike all other authors in this part, and most authors in the volume, who proceed from the vantage point of research, Shilpaa looks at the discourse from the lens of teaching. Given the trans-disciplinary nature of the subject matter at hand, teaching disability is not always as straightforward as teaching, say, poetry, physics, sociology or computer science. The issues of disability have to be framed in, and rooted through, the methodological scheme of the discipline/academic branch in which the concerned teachers and students are procedurally located. For example, the modules on disability prepared for the audience in humanities are considerably different from those designed and taught in social sciences. Within these broad academic categories there can still be differences based on the disciplinary parameters. Anand's chapter brings to the table some of these nuances, with a primary focus on literary and historical studies situated in the branch of humanities. The chapter gives us a historical account of disability teaching in the literature classes, and this history begins in the United States. It then moves on to identify the factors that inform and shape the classroom interactions of disability discourse in the Indian context. The chapter contains a rich description, a well-researched account and critical analysis of teaching disability in literature and history – details the aspiring scholars would greatly benefit from.

One of the exciting features of the book is that it places a high premium on the institutionalisation of disability academics and action, which generally translate into 'Disability studies' and 'disability services'. Part II of the book has chapters dedicated to discussing the subject in detail. Though both the disability studies and disability services often seem to go hand-in-hand, their relationship is intricate, if not complicated. There are two broad strands: one making a case for complementary relationship, and the other arguing for a dichotomous functioning. The reader gets a chance to witness both of these strands in their vigour and vitality. While Tanmoy Bhattacharya's chapter, broadly on disability studies as an extension of service-knowledge cordiality, represents the complementary relationship, Amita Dhanda's account of establishing Centre for Disability Studies in a prominent Law University and contributing to the evolution of disability policy in the country does not take exactly such a position. Reading these two chapters together, however, has an advantage, in that one can clearly see the difference of perspectives in approaching disability discourse, where one considers it as an extension to service delivery, and the other looks at it as a product of academic advocacy. This is exactly the kind of debate the scholars committed to the growth of disability studies as an interdisciplinary enterprise should eagerly be looking for and, now that it finds the right inaugural tone at last, one should engage with it rather than draw ready-made conclusions from it.

Coincidently or otherwise, an overall survey by Nilika Mehrotra and Ritika Gulyani of disability programmes – services and academics included – in Hyderabad brings to fruition the debate Bhattacharya and Dhanda overtly engage in – not necessarily with each other but through the subjects they present to the readers. The chapter by Mehrotra and Gulyani maps out the services and academic activities run through the disability units in major institutes of higher education located in and around Hyderabad, Telangana state. University of Hyderabad (UOH), National Academy of Legal Studies and Research (NALSAR), English and Foreign Languages University of Hyderabad (EFLUH), Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) find prominent place in the survey, for reasons best explained by the authors of the chapter. Each of these institutes of higher education has a unique arrangement to cater to the special needs of students, faculty and other staff with disabilities. The readers would do well to get into the text to know the details. This particular chapter would be useful not just for the ethnographic details it records but also for the methodological model it offers for the researchers interested in surveying the growth and dynamics of a field of study in a particular urban conglomeration.

Neerja Sharma has a narrative account of the evolution of disability studies in one of the oldest colleges established to teach home sciences in the national capital, Delhi. Her chapter is instructive in so far as it informs us the potential disability studies can have even outside the social science-humanities studies and research set-ups. But the conclusions drawn at the end of the chapter, particularly the casual approach shown by the author with regard to the rigour and expertise required for disability teaching and research, seems a bit problematic. These are the issues the future researchers would have to carefully tread through, though.

The chronicles of disability studies in India, if ever to be written as a separate account, two prominent centres of higher learning would compete for an equal space in it: Centre for disability-studies at NALSAR (whose account by Amita Dhanda has already been referred to in the preceding paragraphs), and Centre for Disability Studies and Action at the Tata Institute of social sciences (TISS), Mumbai campus, whose first-hand account is presented by one of its chief architects, Srilatha Juvva. Juvva's chapter is a combination of personal reflection about, and professional participation in, a project that literally took off from scratch but quickly gained ground, carving out a niche for itself and for the cause it initiated in the first place. Srilatha Juvva has been part of this long journey, and her chapter is full of anecdotes, evidentiary facts and experiences. Chapters by Dhanda and Juvva can, indeed, come handy for academicians and administrators looking for advice to run disability studies centres for teaching and research in Indian higher education ecosystem.

The volume has an equal space for academia-activism linkages that contribute to knowledge production. Several authors have contributed chapters that examine issues ranging from deaf education to accessible tourism. Jagdish Chander outlines the history of visually impaired youth in Delhi almost from 1970s which eventually contributed to the rise of disability debate and discourse; Ritika Gulyani examines the question of deaf education; Deepa Sonpal and Vanmala Hiranandani make a convincing case for the potential the emancipatory research holds for the growth of disability knowledge and its empowering effect for disabled persons as stakeholders; Nimushakavi Vasanthi evaluates "right to work" as an entitlement through the lens of critical disability theory; Mahima Nayar brings to light the concerns emanating from, and the lessons imbibed within, the engagement between non-disabled field researchers and disabled field subjects; Kavita Murugkar, Anurag Kashyap and Abir Mullick demonstrate, through their field research, the hidden prospect of converting the heritage sites as spaces of knowledge creation, provided one is ready to take that extra step of making them architecturally accessible and socially inclusive.

The academia-activism interface, like service-knowledge engagement, is a contested field, and it would do no good to debate as to which one of these processes precedes the one on the other side of the hyphen. As more and more research bring newer facts, each of these alternative arguments becomes stronger than before, making the episteme a contested terrain. The disability studies discourse in India, like anywhere else, will have to grapple with some of these challenges in the days to come and, should find ways to respond effectively, if it is to remain relevant as an interdisciplinary pursuit. The present volume inaugurates this re-invigorating field as it opens up the discussion for a full public view.

Disability Studies in India edited by Nilika Mehrotra with contributions from the archetypal theorists and active practitioners alike, is long awaited. The most distinguishing feature of the book, in my view, is that it contains in its fold the research findings and experiential notes written by the chief architects of disability scholarship in the Indian subcontinent, along with reports of the ongoing research put forth by the scholars on whose shoulders the future of the discourse squarely rests. The watchful readers like me wish the volume in its next avatar to initiate a one-to-one dialogue between disability studies and other disciplines like law, literature, sociology, economics, and perhaps biology and artificial intelligence. In the meantime, *Disability Studies in India* would remain a must-read text for scholars in disability studies and all others engaged in a serious interdisciplinary research.

N. Annavaram

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Review

Two-Day webinar titled 'Art Criticism and the Pandemic' jointly organised by The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Chris McCormack, Associate Editor of *Art Monthly*, one of UK's leading magazines of contemporary visual art, held 9-10 July 2020.

Building with Care:
A review of 'Art Criticism and the Pandemic'

Located in central London, the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art[1] is an important institution engaged in supporting and cultivating new ways of understanding British art history and culture. It has a rich collection of more than 26,000 printed material in its library and archives, which include books, pamphlets, catalogues, theses, research papers of art historians, art critics; and more than 1,00,000 reference photographs of British paintings and drawings from 1500 to 2000. Among its various activities, including publishing monographs and catalogues and the journal *British Art Studies*, running in-house research projects, offering grants and fellowships for academic research and disseminating of knowledge, the centre also holds various art events for scholars, students and connoisseurs of British art regularly – the event under review is one such event.

The two-day event had a very well thought-out line-up of ten speakers who ranged from art historians, art critics, curators to practicing artists, like David Dibosa (art historian/ critic), Juliet Jacques (writer/journalist), Khairani Barokka (artist), Bárbara Rodríguez Muñoz (curator), Rehana Zaman (artist), Neo Sinoxolo Musangi (artist), Larne Abse-Gogarty (art history), Marina Vishmidt (writer, editor, critic), Robert McRuer (disability scholar), and Jade Montserrat (artist/ writer). However, this review will not touch upon all the content but only those issues will be highlighted that in some way or other are relevant to disability research and activism. Furthermore, the presentation by Barokka has been reproduced in full in the Provocations section of his journal (see pp. 68-70).

The event was organised with the twin aim of first exploring the possibility of a reorganised globalised art world and renewal and healing of structural inequity driven by a differential attention to certain bodies, the former the theme of the first day titled 'Resetting the global' and the latter the theme of the second day titled 'Whose body?' – I will henceforth refer to these twin aims as Resetting and Body. Quite naturally then, disability figures and features prominently in both of these engagements. Themes of both the days were geared towards finding alternatives, in general, to the existing structures of the colonised art world, arising out of the current conditions defined by the pandemic. Although, it was targeted to discover renewal strategies for the existing wronged but

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[1] The website for the Centre is at: https://www.paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk

currently interrupted art world through by (re)looking critically at the existing structures, it is an admirable goal from the perspective of any such wronged system of structures – including, and more so, disability – that preferentially 'allow' only certain positionings to exist and dismiss or suppress certain others.

Looking carefully, we discover a common final hope arising across these two themes. The event was carefully curated not just to examine the current situation through a critical lens but to in fact arrive at a hopeful possible future strategy arising out of a renewed reconceptualization of a space defined by care and healing. This attempt at organising work around care, to develop a community of care, a code of conduct built around and beyond predefined categories where every actor feels safe, is guided by an ethics of care articulated by disabled people's movement and the well-known feminist ethics of care that criticizes notions of independence – I will come back to this issue immediately below.

Listening to the panellists, I felt a certain sense of liberation and relief, not only was the composition of the panels were very well thought-out, extremely diverse for one, and all the panellists making excellent points, I had the distinct sense that the event made definite progress towards its stated goal of evolving a framework for a renewal informed by notions of care. Though the hope of a renewed form of activism addressing inequity and injustice in the art world may not have been realised, there were enough seedlings identified that may germinate and sprout new ideas of art activism elsewhere – I briefly mention one possibility below, which can be constructed around traditional spaces rethought from the vantage point of care.

In fact, the first speaker David Dibosa, one of the authors of the book *Post Critical Museology* (2013, Routledge), and a trained curator with a PhD in Art History from Goldsmiths College for a thesis on art, shame and commemoration, introduced the audience on the first day to a model of distribution that can provide one dimension to such a renewed form of activism, where global art centres move towards distributing contents in different ways including accessing newer groups of people. With interest ranging from addressing ways in which exhibitions act as focal points for social practices, through exhibition as a site of mourning and commemoration to examining ways in which museum exhibitions can be places for staging of national identities, Dibosa engaged in a stimulating discussion on the second day on the notion of the museum as a space of sanctuary – an expression invoked by another presenter on the that day, Barbara Rodrigues Muñoz, curator at Wellcome Collection, London and the author of the recent book *Heatlh* published from MIT Press, whose own presentation was titled 'The land of the healing'. Dibosa interpreted such a notion of a sanctuary as an invitation to rethink our relationships to spaces – how we make sanctuaries, which refer back to his own nuanced form of a distributed model of engagement. One idea to explore in the domain of activism then would be to seek ways of creating safe and supportive sanctuaries informed by an ethics of care.

Khairani Barokka, an Indonesian born disabled artist currently operating out of London and the only disabled artist/ critic present in the panel, did not necessarily think that museums as sanctuaries can be as uncomplicated as discussed or be thought of outside the power network, often informed by funding and leadership structures, that they are a product of, demanding therefore of us to go beyond the binaries of these being places of resting and challenging.

Although disability found a clear presence in only two of the presentations – on the first day through Barokka's passionate presentation and on the second, through the disability theorist Robert McRuer's presentation – nine out of the total ten papers presented talked about issues concerning marginalities and their relationship to art, therefore some way or other, all the talks were relevant for examining the thesis of ways of decolonising art; the only exception being the presentation by Larne Abse-Gogarty, a lecturer at UCL's Slade School of Art, London, which rather stayed within the limits of a more conventional art talk and did not much concern itself with the raging issues arising out of the current emergent situation (although she did mention black subjecthood), which McRuer in fact went as far as calling it 'dangerous times'.

I really liked David Dibosa's inaugural intervention (he called it 'provocations') that I already mentioned briefly above, which set the tone for the whole event. He offered his provocations in relation to what he called 'cross-winds' of the current crisis. I found it amazing that the metaphors that figured prominently in Dibosa's talk were all climatic, for example, 'cross-winds' (already pointed out), 'headwind' – the Pandemic itself, turbulence – the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement spontaneously triggered by the killing of George Floyd by the Minneapolis police, third-wind, and storms, referring to a concurrent receding global economy. However, though these changes may seem like unprecedented, Dibosa challenged that view by discussing how similar they are to the changes that have been noticed both at the beginning of the 19th (Napoleonic wars) and 20th (initiation of modernity) centuries that brought about abolition of serfdom and slavery – a precedent of BLM, if you like These changes are therefore seen as epochal shifts rather than radical and unprecedented changes. However, one must be cautious in perceiving parallels across what are exclusively dominant tropes in the history of the west/ global north as there are well-known other similar tropes elsewhere (for example, the Dalit uprising in India in the last quarter of the 19th century), predicated upon categories that are comparable (if not equivalent to) race.

He organised his short talk around three pointers that are all very relevant to the current conditions of making and viewing art, namely, audiences, collections and the structure of patronage. All these intersect in very relevant ways with the twin aim of the event – Resetting and Body. The audience interface has changed due to COVID, in fact he says, 'the model of blockbuster is now bust', that is, mass consumption of visual art has now come to an end. In this altered scenario, which he calls 'a reversal of the modern', the only way to engage with art is through a distributed model of engagement mentioned earlier. Similarly, collections/ holdings have now to be rethought in the face of questions arising out of challenges thrown up by struggles for racial justice – toppling of statues in public is a form of this questioning. We need to now revisit the national collections and holdings (for example but not only, institutions like the British museum) and rethink how collections have been put together. Similarly, the structures of patronages, although have a prior history of critique based on carbon/ fuel fossil companies supporting art institutes, these criticisms have now become accelerated in the current crisis.

Barbara Rodrigues Muñoz's presentation titled 'The land of healing', already mentioned above, seeks ethical inspiration from the young artist Tabita Rezaire's work on decolonial healing, in fact, the title of the presentation is from the sentence 'The wound is the land of healing' in the latter's prologue in the recent *Handbook of media and migration* (Sage, 2020). Incidentally, Rezaire exhibited her installation titled 'Sorry for Real Sorrow' at the increasingly important Kochi-Muziris Biennale in Kerala, India a couple of years ago. The quotation that inspired Muñoz, is the following:

> To overcome the disconnection to ourselves, to each other, to the earth and the universe mandated by coloniality, the healing we require is not solely physical nor mental but emotional, political, historical, technological and spiritual.
>
> (*ibid*: xxxll)

Rezaire advocates healing as transforming, as unlearning, as aligning, and as listening. This I think is a good formula for creating safe spaces informed by care. And Muñoz does exactly that when she invokes the notion of a 'sanctuary' for a space like a museum. Her work is also inspired by another important, and recent contribution in matters of care (no puns intended), namely the work of Mar´ia Puig de la Bellacasa, especially her 2017 book *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. The quote Muñoz uses (although she sates the chapter name 'Thinking of Care'; rather than the book name) is the following, that clearly establishes the importance of interdependency as a basic condition for life – one of the ten principles of the Disability Justice movement:

> Interdependency is not a contract, nor a moral ideal – it is a condition. Care is therefore concomitant to the continuation of life for many living beings in more than human entanglements – not forced upon them by a moral order, and not necessarily a rewarding obligation. (*ibid*: 70)

Muñoz's work also directly references work in disability, in fact in Disability Justice (see the article 'The killing of Eyad Al-Hallaq by the Israeli border police on 30 May 2020' in the Provocations section of this journal, pp. 71-76). She quotes from Philadelphia, US based artist and activist with chronic illness, Carolyn Lazard's accessibility in arts guide called 'Accessibility in the Arts: A Promise and a Practice' (2019), commissioned by a community art organisation New York called, Recess, again, directly talking about access not in juridical terms but in terms of interdependence:

> The creation of accessible spaces cannot be done without dismantling the pernicious liberalism that pervades our lives and our relationships with each other, not just as artists and art workers, but as subjects of the state. To commit to disability justice is to redefine the terms of subjecthood. It's to undo the rampant individualism that is a fiction for both disabled and nondisabled people: everyone has needs. (*ibid*: pp. 9-10)

The Kenyan queer artist, Neo Sinoxolo Musangi enters this space in her talk via, what I think, another Disability Justice theme – if not by the Principles but by implication – namely, speaking from where one *is*, in her terms, *thinking blackly*. She frames this as thinking from a care ethics perspective which is to speak from where *I am standing* – this is *my* place, where *I* have been set, where *I* have been put – the *locātus*. She derives this as a strategy – contra Morrison, and more in line recent Black scholarship of Saidiya Hartman (*Scenes of Subjection*, OUP, 1997), Sylvia Wynter and others – to not to speak back, to not to insist on being included in this human community, but rather to start figuring out ways of surviving *from here*, from within that blackness. This, I believe, is a good model for a renewed activism that is waged from within a locātus of care.

I want to close this review with Robert McRuer's presentation that yet again touches upon Disability Justice and survival – as in Neo's thinking blackly above – and how it is thriving as a movement in Latin America. Although his presentation was mostly about his last book *Crip Times* (2018, NYU Press), it underlined the importance of "crip ways of knowing", in other words, cripestimology (explored by Merri Lisa Johnson and Robert McRuer's Introduction to two special issues of the *Journal of Literary Cultural Disability Studies*, 2014). He mentioned how neoliberalism spectacularises disability neglecting disabled peoples' actual lives and how disability remains as an under-theorised component of the global austerity politics.

This is an important event that situates itself firmly within the current global situation yet at the same time suggests ways of looking beyond it, and as this review has hopefully shown, how disability figures prominently in much of current thinking – in not just theoretical circles but in worlds that disability scholarship is yet to engage with meaningfully.

Tanmoy Bhattacharya

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