The Bureaucratic Making of Disability

Tanya Titchkosky

Abstract: Making use of interpretive methods of social inquiry, informed by disability studies, I show how the Western bureaucratic orientation is particularly troubled by those unable to keep the rules. Disability is, today, a term used to delineate such an inability. Exploring the meaning of bureaucratic definitions of disability can help us learn something about the organising force of bureaucracy on our lives. In particular, this paper explores a paradox found within the bureaucratic orientation whereby disability is conceptualised as lack of function resulting in an inability to keep the rules that is, nonetheless, managed by the imposition of further rules that need to be kept. Ultimately, this paper tries to reveal what becomes of disability under bureaucratic control not only to learn something about how bureaucracy works but also to learn something about how disability is made meaningful.

Keywords: disability studies, queer phenomenology, Arendt, normalisation.

> Life is to be lived, not controlled; and humanity is won by continuing to play in the face of certain defeat… (Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 1952).

Since falling from its pinnacle of academic attention in the 1970s, 'We no longer like to think about bureaucracy', says David Graeber, 'yet it informs every aspect of our existence'.[1] Those who do like to think about bureaucracy though, do not like to do so through its demarcation and management of disability. This is a fascinating omission found throughout a field that thinks about the processes and structures of bureaucratic organisation. Intrigued by this omission, this paper pursues the singular aim of revealing how a bureaucratic orientation is a constitutive force in the making of the meaning of disability. By constitutive force, I mean to join those social theorists, like Clarke and Newman who conceive of bureaucracy as a form of praxis based on rule governed managerial orientation that provides not only a set way of proceeding but also a form of perception.[2]

Hannah Arendt can assist us here.[3] Bureaucracy as the 'rule by nobody,' she says in *On Violence*, is particularly troubled by 'those who did not keep the rules' (p42). They become marked as the 'asocial or abnormal.' Today, disability serves as such a mark within any organisation. Faced with those who do not, or cannot, keep the rules, offices within organisations tend to generate more rules to mark, perhaps to make workable, and always to further demarcate those who do not keep the rules. According to cultural historian of disability, Henri Jacque Stiker, 'all those who do not meet an

1. David Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy*, Brooklyn, Melville House, 2015, p5. (Hereafter *Utopia*).

2. John Clarke & Janet Newman, *States of Imagination*, openDemocracyUK, 2014, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/states-of-imagination/>

3. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958. (Hereafter *Human Condition*); Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, New York, Harcourt Brace, 1970 (Hereafter *On Violence)*.

 DOI: 10.3898/NEWF:100-101.13.2020

ordained norm are categorised [disabled], in order to encourage them to recover it and re-enter the competition … ' of contemporary capitalist life.[4] Not meeting the ordained 'norm', and thus deemed disabled, means that people are faced with further bureaucratic demarcation and as I have suggested elsewhere are 'included only as an excludable-type' since, they are documented as asocial or abnormal.[5] These are some of the primary ways through which disability is made to appear by and within contemporary workplace organisations.

What becomes of people when their designation – disability – serves primarily as a category for naming those who do not keep the rules of regularised normative participation? Disabled people seem to become a target for bureaucratic processes of circumspection through which a reminder of the centrality of rule-governed practices is produced for all participants. The consequences of bureaucratic demarcations of disability as those unable to keep the rules, ranges from acts of judicious accommodation, to the on-going normalisation of exclusion, to crass indifference inducing deadly life-limiting circumstances.[6] At the same time, it is not possible for all people to keep all the rules of a bureaucracy all of the time, still only some people are marked as unable to do so. I restrict my exploration here to an elucidation of the meaning of 'being ruled by nobody' as it intersects with the social act of disability demarcation.

Critical interpretive methods guide this inquiry. To explore bureaucracy as a perceptual, that is, as an interpretive modality, is to uncover the orientation necessary for bureaucracy to appear. As Sarah Ahmed suggests in *Queer Phenomenology*:

> The starting point for orientation is the point from which the world unfolds: the 'here' of the body and the 'where' of its dwelling' (p8).[7]

I start from an unfolding of disability as it appears in the midst of things said and done within organisations that are taken-for-granted as bureaucratic, such as defining disability. In particular, I will consider dominant definitions of disability produced by and for organisations, such as the World Health Organisation and the governments of Canada, UK, and USA. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, any process or utterance that appears as bureaucratic can serve as material for the purposes of this exploration since it gestures toward the worldview from which it springs and to which it returns.[8] Making use of theorists who understand social life as grounded in interpretive acts enables me to explore the meaning of a bureaucratic orientation by examining its artifacts while attempting to address one key question: How does disability appear as a subject of concern within a bureaucratic orientation?

In order to better understand a bureaucratic orientation as a constitutive force generating a particular way to name and define disability, I turn now to theorists who support the idea that uncovering taken-for-granted

4. Henri-Jacques Stiker, *A History of Disability*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1997, p140. (Hereafter *History of Disability)*.

5. Tanya Titchkosky, 'Governing embodiment: technologies of constituting citizens with disabilities', *The Canadian Journal of Sociology / Cahiers Canadiens de Sociologie*, 28, 4, 2003, pp517-42, p518.

6. Mo Stewart, 'Psychological tyranny masquerading as welfare reform', *Journal of Critical Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 19, 1, 2019, pp23-26; Sherene H. Razack, *Dying from Improvement: Inquests and Inquiries in to Indigenous Deaths in Custody*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2015.

7. Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 2006, p8. (Hereafter *Queer Phenomenology)*.

8. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, New York, Routledge, 1945.

understandings is a way to pursue an analysis that grapples with what we already seem to know and do.

THE BUREAUCRATIC ORIENTATION

> In a fully developed bureaucracy, there is nobody left with whom one could argue, to whom one could present grievances, on whom the pressures of power could be exerted. Bureaucracy is the form of government in which everybody is deprived of political freedom, of the power to act; for the rule by Nobody is not no-rule, and where all are equally powerless we have a tyranny without a tyrant (Arendt, *On Violence*, p38).

Along these lines, Pierre Bourdieu suggests that,

> Objective relations of power tend to reproduce themselves in relations of symbolic power. In the symbolic struggle for the production of common sense or, more precisely, for the monopoly over legitimate naming, agents put into action the symbolic capital that they have acquired in previous struggles and which may be juridically guaranteed.[9]

'Perception is a way of facing something' (Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p21).

9. Pierre Bourdieu, 'Social space and symbolic power', *Sociological Theory*, 7, 1, 1989, p21. (Hereafter *Social Space*).

People face bureaucracy as an impersonal form of powerful governance, where activities and people are managed, not necessarily by elected representatives, nor charismatic personalities, but mostly by written rules developed by offices subject to lines of hierarchical organisation.[10] Regardless of personalities within or events without, bureaucratic orientation employs an impersonal form of rule-driven governance, the rule by nobody. This kind of rule, which Arendt describes as a tyranny without a tyrant, reflects, as Bourdieu suggests, the power to produce common sense – what in phenomenology is called 'the natural attitude' at play in the workings of everyday life, including ways of perceiving, naming problems, and thereby making reality.[11]

10. Max Weber in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1946, p196ff.

11. Alfred Schutz, 'Common sense and scientific interpretations of human action', *Collected Papers Vol 1*. The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1962, pp3-47.

Elites seeking symbolic and material capital, but no-less caught in the perceptual apparatus of common sense, attempt to use bureaucratic rules to change some of their rules. The wishes of the elites are not, however, likely to have their interests manifest without providing at least an illusion of keeping the rules. If they do not, higher ruling bodies may be appealed to in order to keep in check individuals' power – unless, of course, the bureaucracy is one created to implement a dictator's will as in totalitarian regimes (*Human Condition*, p216). Even the ubiquitous profit motive and neo-colonial control is mediated through bureaucratic governance. Following the understanding that much of daily governance occurs at the level of the mundane, however, it is in the ordinary day-to-day expressions

of bureaucratic rule where we might feel the 'agency' of which Bourdieu speaks, and which emanates from conformity to a common-sense version of keeping the rules (*Social Space*, p21).

Bureaucratic governance also includes rules guiding the local participants' knowledge and use of rules.[12] In that all rules cannot possibly be kept, there are meta-rules about how to keep and not keep the rules. 'It's not just that some people get to break the rules,' says David Graeber, 'it's that loyalty to the organisation is to some degree measured by one's willingness to pretend this isn't happening' (*Utopia*, p19). What Graeber calls 'pretending', can be conceived of as common sense, as a way of perceiving which rules are necessary at a particular moment to sustain the bureaucratic orientation. Bureaucratically oriented action, while depriving people of freedom, does make people agents of the establishment able to wield the symbolic capital that comes with conformity to day-to-day rule following.

12. Dorothy Smith, *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1990, p62.

Bureaucracy, then, will necessarily have a problem with anyone not keeping the rules. There is, however, a legitimate exception to this, namely, people understood as those who *cannot* keep the rules – the designation for this is disability or, bureaucratically speaking, people with disabilities.

The term disability has served in the West at least since the seventeenth century where it was used to mark the 'deserving poor' in English vagrancy policy and poor laws.[13] This sense of disability takes on a more defined shape following the Second World War in the industrial West. Of an equivalent term in French, 'handicap', Stiker says, it serves 'as a designation of disadvantage, illness, amputation, loss [which] is secondary in comparison to signifying competition, rivalry, participation in a trial' (*History of Disability*, p148). While 'handicapped', like the term 'the disabled,' had mostly been removed from the English bureaucratic lexicon shortly after the 1981 United Nations' 'International Year of Disabled People', the sense that people with disabilities need to enter the competitive fray just like non-disabled people remains.

13. Deborah A. Stone, *The Disabled State*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1984, p29.

With technology and the re-arrangement of workplaces and tasks, some people are made to fit in and to keep the rules, and are 'dissolved into the social whole, such as it is', suggests Stiker (*History of Disability*, p192). Once assimilated, the interest in disability is transformed into an interest in ability; an impairment experience may remain, but it is made an unremarkable state of personal privacy. A bureaucratic interest in disabled people is one that measures and documents peoples' lack of function in relation to the possible provision of services oriented to assimilation or, given a failure to assimilate, legitimised exclusion. The idea is to support people in their return to an unquestioned relation to the rules, or at least appearing to do so.

Disability has an extensive history as the umbrella term for those who, due to no fault of their own, are struck by an accident of fate, affecting body, mind or senses, and making them unable to keep the rules understood as necessary for normal participation. And yet, not able to 'pretend', that is, conform to common sense ways of appearing to keep the rules, disabled

people represent a potential political power to do things differently, which brings the 'rule by nobody' to consciousness, perhaps even putting it into question. This potentially disruptive difference that disability can represent does not align with a bureaucratic orientation. Paradoxically, the category disability, as produced through a bureaucratic orientation, can be read as a way to control those who don't align with the bureaucratic orientation. Disability designation is, in this sense, a management device.

People with disabilities thus serve as a designation that keeps questions pointing away from governance even while demanding that disabled persons bureaucratically define their impairments routinely by the provision of medical documentation.[14] This points, once again, to the bureaucratic power to name in order to further demarcate so that any disruption to keeping the rules is contained within the individual. A further paradox – the designation of disability perplexes the designators and within bureaucracies there are discussions regarding the complex difficulties of defining and thus managing disability.

COMPLEX ACTS OF DEFINITION

Nearly every bureaucratic organisation suggests that defining people with disabilities is a complex multi-faceted matter. The National Academies Press (NAP) in *The Dynamics of Disability* [15], citing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 2001, says that the ADA 'defines the term disability 'with respect to an individual — (A) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual; (B) a record of such an impairment; or (C) being regarded as having such an impairment' (p54). This multi-faceted definition is accompanied by the claim that there are competing models of what disability is, including:

> … the Functional Limitation Paradigm (Nagi, 1965, 1979); the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps (ICIDH) (WHO, 1980), recently revised and renamed the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF); the Institute of Medicine (IOM) models (IOM, 1991, 1997b); and variations from other authors in many different contexts (Patrick and Peach, 1989; Verbrugge and Jette, 1994) (*Dynamics of Disability*, pp54-55).

One way to engage this concern for 'models' is to read them against the 'social model of disability' as developed in the UK by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS).[16] Those who subscribe to this model suggest that disability is the result of the failure of a society to respond appropriately to impairment. It posits an essential gap between having an impairment and becoming disabled since it is society, and not the body, that transforms an impairment into disability. In contrast, the bureaucratic

14. Sara Ahmed, 'You end up doing the document rather than doing the doing: Diversity, race equality and the politics of documentation', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30, 4, 2006b, pp590-609;Thomas Abrams, 'Disability and Bureaucratic Forms of Life' *Nordic Journal of Science and Technology*. 3, 1, 2015, pp12-21; Vera Chouinard, 'Like Alice through the looking glass: accommodations in academia', *Resources for Feminist Research*, 14, 3, 1996, pp3-11; Vera Chouinard, 'Like Alice through the looking glass II: the struggle for accommodation continues', in *Resources for Feminist Research*, 33, 2010, pp161-177; Jean Louis Deveau, 'Workplace accommodation and audit-based evaluation process for compliance with the Employment Equity Act:inclusionary practices that exclude – An institutional ethnography', *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 26, 3, 2011, pp151-172; Diane Million, *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights*, Tucson, The University of Arizona Press, 2013; Margrit Shildrick and Janet Price, 'Breaking the boundaries of the broken body', in J. Price and Shildrick, M (eds.), *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader,* New York, Routledge, 1999, pp432-45.

orientation makes use of various models of disability as a way to manage and fill in this gap between impairment and disability with meticulous details of how an impairment disrupts the keeping of the rules. Impairment causes a lack of individual function. Even though 'the social' may be mentioned in various other models of disability, the social is not depicted as a power transforming people with impairments into oppressed people since disability, from a bureaucratic orientation, is defined as originating in individuals who cannot keep the rules due to their impairments.

What the bureaucratic orientation requires is the perception that there are many ways to delineate a lack of function *as* an inability to keep the rules and to hold on to this as the sole significance of disability. Disability differs and definitions of disability proliferate and change from one bureaucracy to the next and most Western nations have produced an extensive inventory of the definitional perplexity that they have found, or better *made* disability to be. For example, the Government of Canada, in *Defining Disability: A Complex Issue*,[17] 'highlights the fact that confusion exists between definitions, eligibility criteria and program objectives', while acknowledging that a unified, 'harmonised,' definition might not only be impossible but also undesirable. From a bureaucratic perspective there is a 'necessity for finding some economical administrative methods of deciding eligibility' in order to allocate resources or manage exclusion in an efficacious manner (*Dynamics of Disability*, p63).

In whatever way disability is defined, it has everything to do with the context and interests of the situation within which it comes to require a definition. In this way, exactly who is positioned as unable to keep the rules of an organisation has something to do with the context, interests and purposes of those doing the defining. Consider the following definition from the UK Equality Act of 2010:

> The definition of disability set out in the Act and described in this guidance is the only definition relevant to determining whether someone is a disabled person for the purposes of the Act. … The Act defines a disabled person as a person with a disability. A person has a disability for the purposes of the Act if he or she has a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (S6(1)) (p7).[18]

The Equality Act suggests that the definition of disability is relevant for the purposes of the Act, disability is, thus, defined as it is defined. Disability becomes the rule-guided escape hatch from the same rules that defined it. It remains both something within the individual and defined in relation to the situation or context of its appearance, thus 'The Act defines a disabled person as a person with a disability.' This is not a joke (or not only a joke). It is, however, a significant cultural paradox signifying the transformation

15. NAP: Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 'Conceptual issues in defining work disability', *The Dynamics of Disability: Measuring and Monitoring Disability for Social Security Programs*, Washington, DC, The National Academies Press, 2002, pp53-64. (Hereafter *Dynamics of Disability)*

16. Michael Oliver, *The Politics of Disablement*, Hampshire, MacMillan, 1990, p11.

17. Government of Canada, *Defining Disability: A Complex Issue*. Office for Disability Issues, HRDC, Ottawa, Human Resources Development Canada, 2003, p3.

18. Office for Disability Issues: HM, *UK Equality Act 2010*, 2010 <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/570382/Equality_Act_2010-disability_definition.pdf>

of disability as a phenomenon of social identity (disabled person) into an individual with a disability attached (person with a disability). A bureaucratic orientation can enable an organisation to keep the rules through the legitimate name for, and controlled appearance of, those unable to keep the rules, to live normally within normal day-to-day activities. Thus, an 'adverse effect' on one's 'ability to carry out normal day to day activities' forms the beginning and the end of a bureaucratic interest in disability. If, however, disability is imagined as *life* and not merely adverse effect, then the constraints of this cultural paradox start to become apparent.

That organisations struggle with definitions upon every appearance of disability, points to a firm, albeit taken-for-granted sense of disability established by and for the bureaucratic orientation. Always-already defined as an inability to follow the rules, disability is thus perceived, in Nagi's words, in *The Dynamics of Disability*, as '… a limitation in performing socially defined roles and tasks expected of an individual within a sociocultural and physical environment' (p57). Thus, disabled people are made to straddle this cultural paradox – they are those deemed to be in possession of a condition, the definition of which is completely context dependant yet it is applied to individuals in such a way that their disability appears to be outside of any context other than individual impairment. There are undoubtedly numerous ways for disabled people to straddle this paradox; still, such a paradox provides stability to any bureaucratic organisational edifice since it is a way to manage the containment of those who cannot keep the rules.

While it is repeatedly suggested that disability is difficult to define, it is consistently operationalised as an inability to keep the rules within a given context and this serves as an almost universal definition of disability. The bureaucratic definition of disability remains invariable – it is a person unable to keep the rules of the normative order implied by the context within which the disability is noticed and named. And, returning to Graeber, if we entertain the notion that this is the 'era of total bureaucratisation' (p5), then we may now also notice that in contemporary times it is almost impossible to perceive disability as anything other than an individualised lack of function inexorably tied to an inability to keep the rules.

BUREAUCRACY AS PERCEPTION

Securing a monopoly of the process of the legitimate identification of disabled people occurs simultaneously alongside the entrenchment of the meaning of disability within an era of total bureaucratisation. This identification process is reflected in the following: according to the WHO & World Bank,[19] 'More than one billion people in the world live with some form of disability, of whom nearly 200 million experience considerable difficulties in function' (p5). According to the Government of Canada,

19. WHO & World Bank, *World Report on Disability* 2011 <https://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report.pdf>

> Disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and mind and features of the society in which they live. A disability can occur at any time in a person's life; some people are born with a disability, while others develop a disability later in life. It can be permanent, temporary or episodic. Disability can steadily worsen, remain the same, or improve. It can be very mild to very severe. It can be the cause, as well as the result, of disease, illness, injury, or substance abuse.[20]

Or, according to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007, persons with disabilities are those who 'have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'.[21]

Identifying a condition that can be regarded as the cause of a lack of function, and even counting the number of those with it, occurs in relation to an interpretation of function made to fit under the umbrella term 'disability'. This term holds fast even when it is noticed that an environment or other people might exacerbate the situation. All sorts of differences are made manageable through the singular concern with function, or its lack, that seeks to demarcate how people keep or do not keep the rules for regular participation in any environment. In this way, the term disability acts as the entry and inclusion of a person within an organisation as well as the term employed to generate and legitimise exclusion.

The designation disability is a perceptual interpretive move that abstracts people from their environments as well as from other people. Disabling environments remain as such only for persons with disabilities. Moreover, a bureaucratic orientation remains dis-interested in perceiving what it means to participate, to even keep the rules as a blind person, a dyslexic person, or a wheelchair user, etc. (Perhaps this is why I can get to this point in the paper without ever mentioning any particular impairment experience!)

A disability designation whether permanent, temporary, episodic, mild or severe, physical, mental, intellectual or sensory, and regarded either as its own cause or caused by disease, illness, injury, or substance abuse is perceivable, thus interesting, only insofar as it restricts, hinders and makes difficult functioning with a bureaucratic orientation. Thus, despite a proliferation of disability definitions in the West, it remains difficult to locate any version of what disability might be other than lack of function.

That these definitions of disability arise from bureaucratic structures understood as perception and that this framing of disability helps sustain the rules, remains beneath notice. In this way, a bureaucratic orientation promulgates a version of disability that prevents it (disability) from disrupting or changing social order. This is what makes it normal to perceive disability as strictly a problem of assimilation.

20. Government of Canada, *Federal Disability Reference Guide*, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2013 <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/migration/documents/eng/disability/arc/reference_guide.pdf >.

21. UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 2007 <https://www.refworld.org/docid/45f973632.html>.

DISABILITY IN THE BUREAUCRATIC ERA

When the term 'disabled' is taken as lack of function, that is 'not able to keep the rules,' what becomes of the meaning and movement of people within the bureaucratic era? There is little new about an interpretation of disability as a 'cannot'. The prefix 'dis' is rooted in a sense of 'apart,' 'away from,' or 'absence or negation of.' Separated from ability, disability is understood as *cannot*. Following the phenomenological maxim that consciousness is always consciousness of…, the 'cannot' within bureaucracy is not necessarily a consciousness of the legitimate alterity of embodiment. Instead, it is consciousness of a particular relation to the rules.

The concept of 'cannot-keep-the-rules' means that disability marks the need to manage those whose abilities, capacities, inclinations, sensations are not at one with the rules. Given that a bureaucratic orientation is about establishing and keeping the rules, and since disability is the term used to indicate a failure to do so while ruling those who do not follow the rules, it's not surprising that disability designations continue to proliferate. Workplace mental health programs and supports, mindfulness programs, anti-stigma campaigns and the like, suggest that there are ways to help individuals deal with the pressures within organisations while nurturing a better work/life balance. At the same time, the creation of disability designations, such as mental illness, can be read for how disability is a term that serves to secure stability and shore up the dominance of a bureaucratic form of perception.

The act of categorisation of which Stiker writes, is a rule-bound activity that keeps those who cannot keep the rules within the rules of bureaucracy or, failing that, expels them. Removing disability from the realm of myth, symbolism, or never granting it legitimacy as a different way of being, a bureaucratic framing of disability supports ever finer demarcations of individual incapacity. This delineation of disability acts to keep the rules that is the bureaucratic order in play while, ironically, reconfirming that the order is as it should be (*History of Disability*, pp142-143).

When rule-governed ordering of disability allows for the keeping of the rules, there is for all practical purposes, no disability. There is instead an interest in ability, capacity, and the norm. The bureaucratic orientation does not typically perceive that its own context (its rule-guided governance) provides the authority for the identification of disability and to dissolve it into the social whole. Beholden to its own singularity, bureaucracy remains bereft of any necessity for a mutual relation with disability.

CONCLUSION

There are many typical understandings of bureaucracy. It is a detailed division of labour efficaciously aligned with capitalist production; it is a form of governance claiming to protect people from the vagaries of self-interest and

power even as it supports neo-colonial enterprises; it is a collection of tasks impartially ordered through institutionally established cost/benefit rationality that provides the routines for the impersonal workings of mass consumerism. The focus on disability throughout this paper has shown bureaucracy to also be a powerful self-reproducing orientation and way of perceiving that participate in the constitution of rule-guided living in contemporary times.

Imbued with the power to make the sort of subjects it needs for its self-perpetuation; the bureaucratic orientation can be read as a productive form of perception that attempts to notice and to manage people, including those who cannot keep the rules, i.e., disabled people. In the face of the latter, the bureaucratic response is to forge many more rules shaped into definitions, procedures, policies and other actions thus sustaining itself. The appearance of disability marks a moment where the proliferation of rules is activated as an integral part of the bureaucratic era. Still, it has also become apparent that something other than the "inclusion" of disabled people is going on as we bureaucratise life and limb.

Regarding the question of inclusion, Stiker goes even further:

> Readers will have understood … societies have never succeeded in integrating [including] difference *as such*. Either the social group integrates difference in order to make it disappear or integrates partially while excluding certain forms even more, or it excludes radically while paying lip service to a conception of integration … Each path, in its own context, has had its advantages and has its known limitations. Today the will to assimilate, to trivialise by an intense circumscription and treatment, cannot be challenged … it thus seems to me that we must attempt to think an integration *out from* difference (*History of Disability*, p192).

Stiker's 'today' refers to the post-Second World War era with the rise not only of rehabilitation but also of a ubiquitous drive to assimilate. His questioning of inclusion remains relevant – what might it mean to begin to think disability out from its difference? Equally as important, what would it mean to think disability out from the bureaucratic order it is bounded by today?

As I have shown, it is impossible for all people to keep all the rules all of the time. Yet, only some people, some of the time are marked as unable to keep the rules enough of the time to be deemed disabled. Within the bureaucratic order, we can witness a procedural tension between the sense that (1) all things can be managed, including impairment, by establishing rules, but (2) all rules cannot be followed without creating disorder (work-to-rule). When disability appears so too does the fragility of normality of any bureaucratic order. What is not assimilated or what sneaks out despite this rule by nobody are the complex and not so trivial relations between what we do and who we are.

This dynamic relation between doing and being is what Hannah Arendt

speaks of as a 'disclosure' of a *who*. She suggests that who someone is disclosed in the midst of human action (*Human Condition,* p182). Is it possible that disability is potentially the experience that can reassert human action into bureaucratically organised practices and can do so even though the tyranny without a tyrant is ruling the day? The presence of disabled people harbours the possibility of an active disclosure of those who cannot be subsumed into a strict conformity with an established rule, office or normative role.

The appearance of disability within the bureaucratic era can be understood to mark a moment where a severe conservatism intersects a radical form of resistance. By this, I do not mean that disability-experience is inherently disruptive. Afterall, disability is used to shore up the rules that manage people; yet, disability is defined as disability because it is a way of being that is not at one with the rules. Insofar as the meaning of the disability designation is made by a bureaucratic orientation, it is made at the intersection of maintaining the status quo and the potential for change. Disability, in this sense, demonstrates the fragility of rule-guided bureaucratic governance and can reveal that there are limits to the dominant (ruling) conception of disability as nothing other than an inability to keep the rules. Even though disability is typically circumscribed by more and more rules, it is still possible to imagine an inclusion out from disability experience. Adhering to the idea that the meaning of disability is to be found in something other than assimilation, this paper marks my attempt to stop thinking disability into bureaucracy and to think bureaucracy out from disability.

Tanya Titchkosky is a professor in the Department of Social Justice Education at OISE, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, Canada.

This work has been supported by a Canadian Social Science and Humanities Research Grant, 'The (Dis)Appearance of Disability in the Academy.'