

The Contribution of Human Sciences to the Field of Disability in France over Recent Decades

HENRI-JACQUES STIKER

Université Denis Diderot, "Identités, Cultures, Territoires" Laboratory, Paris, France

ABSTRACT *This article only looks at France, and even within this narrow framework it does not pretend to be exhaustive. Several well-known authors have marked the way we think about disability. Goffman for example, with his sociology of interaction, provided a theory and stimulated research on the representations and analysis of institutions. By reconstituting the history of madness, Michel Foucault and Robert Castel legitimized the analysis of disability as a field of research and as a privileged locus of exclusion. As a counterpoint to Foucault, Marcel Gauchet revealed the difficult but necessary democratic requirement for inclusion. In addition to existing contributions, it is therefore necessary to highlight that which has not yet been mobilized. For example, Georges Canguilhem's reflection on the relationship between the living and the life milieu; Foucault's notion of "pastoral power" for an analysis of associations; Freud's concept of "uncanny", which deserves greater attention than that which it has already received. Succinctly put, the area of disability in France would have a great future, if it were given the resources.*

Introduction

The great reflections of Foucault, Canguilhem, Bourdieu and Lacan, to name but a few, have contributed less to the field of disability than it might first be thought. Much research and many concepts and epistemological points of view have found little or no echo in our sector, which has remained somewhat apart. Hence there is a need to list everything that remains to be used if we are to maintain a closer relationship with what is going on in human sciences.

This situation is due to the fact that French research is far from thriving, that research in human sciences is a poor relation, and that research on disability has literally been neglected.

In addition to this objective academic situation, we need to look at the types of questions that the field of disability raises. To what extent have they been the same as those asked by certain great thinkers? Nowadays, should we not be asking different questions from those asked by that generation of great researchers, dependent on the "masters of suspicion"?

Some people will also say that the field of disability does not exist, unless as an area of administrative action that groups together, for the purposes of

social policy, heterogeneous populations and phenomena, disability being a mere representation (Giami 1994). Here is not the place to discuss this question, so I will keep to the position I have always held, in other words, as historian Paul Veyne (1978) says when he takes up an idea from the Middle Ages, there are basic matters (in French: *matières premières*). In all societies there is sexuality, power, art and disability. These basic matters have no other existence than that of their historical determinations within the different cultural systems which develop them and which lead to certain practices. Not that one has to assert the permanence of an object which is simply in a different context. The “object” sex, the relationship between sexes, the organization of power, the aesthetic conceptions are not the same in separate times and spaces, but this does not mean everything is within everything. We can write the history of sexuality, the history of power. Foucault’s work – he who was the craftsman of the discontinuities between systems of thought – is a good example of this epistemological position. Disability has never received the same attention as sex and power. But if disability is administratively constructed in France as the field of “handicap” in which to organize the processes of social recognition, of institutionalization, of regulations, etc., then we must ask ourselves not only how it is possible, but what types of anthropologies develop there, what issues there are, etc.

Disability and impairment are social constructs. It is impossible to perceive them in a naturalistic manner. They are ways of speaking about realities that we cannot grasp.

What questions have human sciences attempted to ask of disability and handicap? What have they developed? What have they unearthed?

I separate epistemological and methodological questions from conceptual questions. There is of course an artifice to do this, for conceptual contributions are often linked to the type of approach chosen. How do we separate Foucault’s search for a way of thinking about madness from the highlighting of exclusion? Yet the way in which we approach these questions is just as interesting as the conceptual results. Let us attempt this separation, without rigidity.

Epistemology, Heuristics, Methodology

From Interactionist Sociology to French Sociology

One must never forget that which is obvious and primary. This is why it is useful to state which disciplines have left their mark on our sector. The first and foremost of these is sociology, and, more precisely, the interactionist sociology, the Chicago school, and above all Goffman, who provided the most pregnant framework for reflection. In the 1960s and 1970s we read *Stigma* (Goffman 1963) and *Asylums* (Goffman 1961). This suited us with regard to the two aspects that the two books represent.

Stigma made it possible to link disability to other social phenomena of discredit (prostitutes, prisoners, etc.) when a situation, a stigma (disability is a strong stigma) labels those who bear it and stigmatizes them. Yet this put

disabled persons on the side of deviancy; this notion came across as a slope upon which it was somewhat dangerous to slide. In comparison, during previous periods the notion of monstrosity occupied the entire conceptual horizon. But Goffman's work also opened up the perspective of observing social representations which come into play in interactions between individuals within a society. This was to join up and go hand in hand with the importance of Moscovici's works and give rise to a great deal of research, such as that of Giami (1994) and Morvan and Paicheler (1990). This is not the place to discuss works in the same vein (Jodelet 1989). I will simply stress the fact that this is what has been taken the furthest. The main contribution of human sciences to the field of disability is the study of representations, as shown in the articles by Calvez and Giami in this very issue.

Although the contribution of psychoanalysis was chronologically earlier, it must be acknowledged straight away the extent to which research on representations has been combined with listening to and analysing people with disability, or their families, in works such as those of Giami (1988) on the "fundamental figure of disability" – the "bad object", and those of Simone Korff-Sausse (1995, 1996) based on the Freudian notion of "uncanny". Psychoanalysts appear to be increasingly interested in the question of disability. This might be a French specificity, because modern psychology is dominated by cognitivism and behaviourism, both of which can be perfectly pertinent sources of study and research. But is it especially French to see violent opposition between analytical and cognitivist perspectives? Yes. It must be admitted that cognitivisms – newer to the field – give no value to the previous wave which was itself highly hegemonic in the 1960s and 1970s. Human sciences are in disagreement. The fact that there is a legitimate "conflict of interpretation" (to use one of philosopher Paul Ricoeur's titles) should not give rise to reciprocal discredit, because the issues are complex and require varied and changing points of view. Yet everyone wants to be right about everything. I often wish we could return to Platonian dialogues, or to thomist *disputatio* where one only makes progress through lengthy confrontation with objections and counter-arguments. French intellectual life is rarely inter-disciplinary.

Returning to Goffman, it was also a case of stressing *normalization* as research into both the average and the ideal, with the average being the ideal at the end of the day. As correctly pointed out by Ewald (1986), whilst the latter aspect comes from 19th century quantitative and probabilist sociologists (Quételet), this does not prevent *Stigma* from teaching us the strength of social standards. Finally, *Stigma* explained the often painful conscience of the persons involved, the awareness of being discredited by others, the awareness of failing in their own eyes because they do not meet the ideal as defined by the imposed average. It is certain that the idea of normalization has been at the heart of much research, as has exclusion, largely due to Foucault. Anything that does not fit the norm, as defined by convention, is subject to segregation. Or else one allows inclusion, but only on the condition that the person in question accepts the norms and that his/her singularity is no longer seen.

Asylums put forward the concept of total institution. This is based on the idea of systematicity, of constantly and durably (hence rules) linking elements which are not initially of the same nature. All aspects of people's lives – emotional, intellectual, social, economic – are part of a system which governs all dimensions and which prevents them from playing any independent role. All areas of existence are controlled by their submission to a unique order, for example, an institution's regulations governing all actions, functions, initiatives, etc.

We read *Asylum*, above and beyond the notion of total institution, in the context of the dominant sociology of the 1960s and 1970s (or even later) and we used Goffman as a base for the epistemological movement dominating all human sciences and which we can list as the movements of suspicion, deconstruction and denunciation. The basic episteme, to take up the term that Foucault used to designate the general approach in which he placed himself, was made up of human science approaches based on the need to find conditions of possibility. Not so much in the way Kant meant – the logical and philosophical conditions for knowledge, morality, aesthetics – as in the sense of socio-political, cultural, historical and economic conditions for knowledge, power and institutions. In the 1960s and 1970s we were in this episteme which could take several different forms; for example, that of Althusser's "final instance", the psychoanalytical form of research on the set of archaic structurations not only for individuals but also in institutions (Lacan), that of dissemination and deconstruction (Derrida), that of the dispersal of meaning so dear to François Lyotard, that of modes of reproduction, of modes of constructing power, of sexes (Bourdieu), that of archaeological and genealogical research, i.e. the radical historicity of thought systems (Foucault), and even the form rooted in Deleuze's philosophy, of Nietzschean inspiration, stressing singularity, changing intensities and micropolicies.

Of course, these various theories differed on fundamental points. Foucault was very harsh on Marxism, Deleuze was utterly anti-dialectic and also anti-lacanian, Althusser distrusted psychoanalysis, and so on. The only thing which matters to me here is to highlight the general epistemic horizon which I will summarize with words of deconstruction and denunciation. One might say that this is the very role of human sciences, and of critical philosophy since Kant. If they do not call into question appearances, established organizations, good intentions, in order to open up the field of possibilities, what use are they? The critical dimension is now vital. I would nevertheless point out that critical thinking did exist (Descartes and Spinoza) prior to the masters of suspicion. I would also stress that at the same time as those I have just mentioned, philosophical works were being built on different bases (Emmanuel Lévinas, Paul Ricoeur, Michel Henry), albeit with no lack of critical thinking. An example is the work of Canguilhem, who developed an epistemology of sciences and who was apart from the others. We were perhaps entering a period where thinking was to take yet other directions, through new and unforeseen definitions, the early signs of which we must attempt to detect.

I think we might agree on the fact that the dominant episteme in human sciences over the previous three or four decades has led us, in the field of disability, to analyse public policies as essentially implementations of social control, the procedures and dispositions as leading to *confinement* (be it real confinement inside institutions, or symbolic confinement such as ghettoization), institutionalization as *near totalitarian*, economic processes as relating to *exclusion* and the general condition of disabled persons as having its roots in *oppression*.

As the authors I have mentioned so far have never really directly examined the question of impairment (I will talk later of Foucault's lesson on "les anormaux" (abnormal people) and about what numerous human science works have said about madness), I will take the closer example of Robert Castel's work, including his recent shifts.

In *The Regulation of Madness: Origins of Incarceration in France* (Castel 1988), the argument is clear, and here I anticipate the question of madness, but this is in order to underline the episteme mentioned above: madness, source of disorder, must be neutralized, administrated. Bourgeois society took up the challenge of this disorder, among others, mainly through control which took the form of tutorship. The aim: to give madness a suitable assignation; the means: to bring philanthropy and enlightened thought together within the field of social medicine; the result: the definition, in the law of 1838 (which was to last a century and a half, a virtually unbeatable record!), of a status of insane person and assisted person.

In *La Gestion des Risques, de l'Anti-psychiatrie à l'Après Psychanalyse* (1981), Castel, taking into account the evolution in psychiatry through antipsychiatry and the fulfilment of free exploration of psychoanalysis, sees the threats facing these attempts at liberation: the reintegration of psychiatry into medicine, and the distribution of psychoanalysis in a cloud of new corporal therapies. In the middle of all this, the reign of expertise, of assessment, which was to become *population management*, promoted by the law of 30 June 1975 in favour of disabled persons and given concrete form by the Gamin system (generalization of an indexing system).

Yet it seems to me that Castel, like Goffman, has read a lot more about disability than other leading sociologists.

Whilst Castel's more recent works, such as the now classic *Transformation of the Social Question* (2003a), or *L'Insécurité Sociale* (2003b), maintain the "suspicion", they analyse the conditions required to build a fairer and more balanced society. Castel takes into account not only the changes in moral standards, but also major economic changes and factors governing control and repression. He describes both the positive opportunities available to us and the negative forces at work. The historical status of disabled persons from the 14th to the 20th century is that of "people exempt from the obligation to work", such as children and the elderly. Nowadays, disabled persons sometimes hold the sub-status of "continuously inserted-rejected". Yet they are not to any large extent undergoing processes of disaffiliation. Robert Castel is a good example of the evolution in sociological thinking which

wishes to preserve its orientation towards deconstruction whilst at the same time showing the possible answers that are thrown up.

I consider Robert Castel to be fairly representative of the epistemic contributions – which I believe to be genuine and not simply reconstructed after the event – of human sciences in our field. Some people will be surprised that I have not mentioned any other leading French sociologists. Of course, concepts such as those of “field” and “habitus” put forward by Pierre Bourdieu had an indirect influence on the field of disability. We often talk about the “field of disability”, but I think that the meaning we give to the expression is far too vague to cover what Bourdieu meant. For Bourdieu it was a concept that essentially referred to a meeting of opposite forces. We use it more in its broader sense of area of study. From the methodological point of view, by working on social phenomena such as the “reproduction” of privileged classes, Bourdieu found no specific applications in the sector of disability.

Michel Foucault's Contributions

One must not forget the impact of *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (Foucault 1965). The enthusiasm was caused by the breakaway from established medical theory and, above all, by the novelty of the analysis showing how there had been “creation” of madness in the very constitution of modern reason implying statutory madness. Madness had to be confined. In the aftermath, Foucault felt that the work done in asylums led to a false humanization of psychiatric knowledge, a false liberation within confinement. In reality, behind its objectivation, positive knowledge of madness renewed the rationalist repression of madness. This was not only true of the creation of all so-called objective entities (including disability) but of the entire regime of modern rationality. Foucault's book was less important for the factual side which has been so criticized by erudite historians, than for the approach it developed: the deconstruction of knowledge the genealogy of truth and of science, and the archaeology of the modern subject. Whilst there were twists in Foucault's thinking, his history of madness introduced many new aspects. In addition to these 1961 perspectives, the contribution of which I will sum up with the words historicity and genealogy – which led to works such as those by Vial (1990), Gateaux-Mennecier (1990) or my own (Stiker 1999) – how else did Foucault influence us?

Before answering this question, we first need to examine the debate which provoked this history of madness and its reversal through Gladys Swain and Marcel Gauchet (1994). These authors not only pointed out what was missing from Foucault's reasoning, but also revealed another way of writing the history of madness, no longer in the indefinite prolongation of exclusion of the classic age, but with a view to re-establishing the partially insane citizen as a political subject. Indeed, one had to think in terms of the desire to include, so prevalent in the major notion of equality that came out of the French Revolution. Mixed in with the culture of radical alterity there was now the

passion for identity, for normalization at the same time as the discovery of a madness that is shared by everyone. People asked whether Foucault's filter was not in fact precisely this passion for integration which allowed him to work back to its opposite – exclusion acting from behind? Of course, but this is to ignore the view of the first Pinel, with his moral treatment that involves resocializing patients, seeing them as curable, freeing them from their confinement within themselves. As Gauchet writes: "From this point on, it was tacitly assumed that there is no human externality to human-ness, that it is not in fact within the power of man to cross the divide into that which is not human" (Swain & Gauchet 1994:XLIII). This debate between Foucault and Swain and Gauchet (which never took place face to face) took place at just the right time in the question of disability, in the 1980s. Indeed, whilst the view of the first Foucault was pregnant, the demand for all civil rights to be made available, the movement for inclusion and society's obligation to provide conditions for a way of living which was dignified and equal to that of everyone else, could not be based simply on an analysis of segregation (ever present), but had to be based on positive rights.

Foucault undoubtedly contributed much more than just his analysis of the birth of madness and its exclusion, which caused the above-mentioned debate. More than 20 years after his death, his lectures at the Collège de France were published. Our field saw the publication of the lecture on *Les anormaux*. This title covers three types of 19th century deviants: the monsters who break the laws of nature and society's norms, the incorrigible who are dealt with through new techniques of correction, and the onanists who depend on family discipline. It must be said that this book marks a transition in Foucault's work. At the time when he gave this lecture, it made few real waves, and even fewer in our field. It is only now that we are reading this work with great attention. Finally, although it is true that this work is important from the point of view of historical cases of abnormality and types of correction, it deals with monstrosity, which whilst on the border of disability does not include it.

I wish to stress the importance of Foucault's analysis of power, even if it did not have the impact that it should have had or still might have. Foucault's real originality was to get away from the analysis of power as an exercise of domination, repression, and coercion, and to analyse all the mechanisms, procedures and strategies which are based upon or which start actions such as: encouraging, inducing, broadening or reducing, making possible or impossible, etc. As Deleuze so excellently points out is his *Foucault*:

Foucault's main theories on power are developed under three headings: power is not necessarily repressive (because it encourages, incites, produces); one exerts it before possessing it (because one can possess it only in a determinable form (class) and a determinate form (State)); it concerns just as much the dominated as the dominant (because it involves all engaged forces) (Deleuze 1988:78).

Let me add that this substitution of "strength" for "power" allows Foucault to make a very clever analysis with which to transpose a typical example of power/strength which prevails in the field of religion but which also extends

to other areas, that which he calls “pastoral power”. He writes that the pastoral power which had for centuries – indeed for a thousand years – been linked to a particular religious institution, was suddenly extended to the entire social body; it found support in a whole series of institutions. And instead of having a pastoral power and a political power which were more or less linked to one another, more or less in competition, we saw the development of an individualizing “tactic”, characteristic of a whole series of multiple powers: those of family, medicine, psychiatry, education, employers, etc. (Foucault, 1983). We will need to use this analysis of the forces at work in order to understand – especially nowadays with ever-present procedures (administrative, assessment, planning, etc.) – this distribution of power and the complexity of its threads. Paradoxically due to Foucault himself, I believe that we have remained too focused on the notion of exclusion, and consequently too focused on a denunciation of power – oppression, hierarchy and state control. This idea of pastoral power should be more useful to us today, to help us understand that procedures of control involve the subtle implementation of expertise, of administrative requirements, of assessment, of security, of quality standards.

The idea of biopower is very much an extension of what I have just said. Foucault set aside his preoccupation with legal power, or rather the legal conception of power, to consider the way in which a series of technologies had been introduced by both the State and science, as from ancient times, aimed at two poles. The first was the human race and population. This major preoccupation led not only to the introduction of laws governing marriage, for example, but also to the monitoring of procreation. The second pole is concerned with the body as an object of manipulation. Here we find both analyses of admission in confession, and analyses of the abnormal masturbator. A vast field of analysis is thus opened up regarding the way in which we approach the impaired body. Not everything has yet been said on this matter, even if François Buton (1999), to take just one example, looked at the way in which the State approaches the deaf and blind body, in a sometimes indiscernible relationship between indigence and infirmity.

Georges Canguilhem's Contributions

The way in which François Buton introduces his subject, with Canguilhem, allows me to accede to this other movement of epistemological thought that the author of *La Connaissance de la Vie* (Canguilhem 1952) represents. I will discuss Canguilhem's contribution in relation to two analyses, that of normality and that of the life milieu of living beings.

The notion of milieu. One might wonder whether this analysis influenced development of the idea of the environment, now so important in our sector, albeit too little understood. The link I am attempting requires a certain amount of audacity. Canguilhem's notion of milieu does not cover that of environment, and vice versa. I would suggest that when thinking about disability as interaction between different factors, it would certainly be

pertinent to examine the notion of milieu in order to give a different depth to the interactions in question than that of the environment.

In the chapter that deals with this question, Canguilhem looks at all of the ways in which the main physical or biological systems have dealt with the relationship between a living entity and its milieu. The milieu is sometimes an element in which we live but which nevertheless remains an exteriority in relation to the living thing, sometimes it is clearly created by organisms, and sometimes the milieu only occasionally changes the individual. In other words, in the history of living sciences the importance of the milieu and the extent to which it can be determining are variable. Geography has tended to make the milieu predominant, to give it a determining action, but we have also seen that in certain cases the milieu becomes an effect which in turn became a cause, and so on to infinity. We are undoubtedly in such a situation with the pollution of the atmosphere. There is interaction, and one can become the cause of the other. With 19th century social psychology we once again find the predominance of the milieu, but we quickly see that if the individual, like all living things, is not at the centre with a certain level of autonomy, the situation becomes catastrophic, pathological. The author, sensitive to living sciences, reacts against the reduction of the living to a collection of parts that one might conceive as being independent of a milieu which both provides the living with its conditions for development, and also constitutes it. It was with this in mind that Canguilhem (1952:147) writes: "Biology must first take the living being as a significant being, and individuality not for an object but for a character in the order of values. To live is to shine, to organize the milieu from a centre of reference which cannot itself be referred without losing its original meaning". In the same way, we have seen that the milieu can affect the phenotype whilst leaving the genotype intact. The milieu provides the conditions for the development but not for the education of living beings.

Canguilhem believes in this idea that the milieu, the environment, take nothing away from this existence, this insistence, of a centre which is more than a mere meeting place for influences, but without going so far as any independence of the individual and of the milieu. I quote:

the milieu proper to man is the world of his perception, in other words the scope of his pragmatic experience where his actions, directed and governed by values immanent in trends, bring out qualified objects and place them in relation to one another and every object in relation to himself (Canguilhem 1952:154).

A centre cannot be resolved to its environment, nor can a living entity be reduced to a crossroads of influences. Therefore any biology that sets out – by kow-towing to the spirit of the physico-chemical sciences – to eliminate all consideration of meaning from its field of enquiry is destined to fall short. A meaning, from a biological and psychological point of view, is an appraisal of values in relation to a need. And a need, for the person who feels it and lives it, is a system of reference that is irreducible and hence absolute (Canguilhem 1952:154).

The purpose of these quotes is to highlight the necessarily active link between an individual and a milieu, but without diluting the individual within the

milieu, and without considering the individual as cut away from his/her links of dependence. Thinking about the milieu should also help us to understand that the word environment is not strong enough.

Nowadays, in the field of disability we find ourselves facing two movements. On one hand, those who see the environment as no more than a simple background, a simple circumstance, a simple container, a simple atmosphere, do not see the real exchange which takes place between the milieu and individuals – their concept of the environment is not strong enough, they do not open up the question of the environment to the question of the milieu. This is why we should criticize the weakness of the definition of disability in the law of 11 February 2005. French legislators do not really know what the environment is. On the other hand, allowing the matter to dissolve into the environment is to attach too much importance to the latter. This is where the social model finds its limits. Once again, new thinking about milieu should make us more careful when it comes to exaggerating the importance of the environment. Canguilhem's thinking is an invitation to take up the question of milieu and environment – before anything else, if you will so allow. In this way we no longer approach the issue through the problem of impairment. The word *interaction* is not bad; it is even very appropriate and it is the word we find in the European definition of disability:

Disability is the result of interaction between impairment, the incapacity caused, and the physical, social and cultural environment. This situation of disability causes a partial or total loss of autonomy and/or difficulties in fully participating (Conseil Français des Personnes Handicapées pour les Questions Européennes 2003).

As I have said elsewhere, in discussions over recent years, we must not become stuck on the word “situation”, that this word first referred back to this idea of interaction and thus of an action by the subject who encounters an action from his/her milieu.

As a complement to Canguilhem's contribution, I felt it would be useful to refer to a concept which was put forward by the philosopher Gilbert Simondon (1964), who was one of the first to think about technical objects and their mode of existence (and technical objects are very important in the field of disability), metastability. Like technical objects, living beings are neither stable nor unstable, they are metastable; in other words there is neither an absolute unconditional nor a purely fluctuating relativity, but a series of metastable situations and states.

The normal and the pathological. Canguilhem's second main contribution is his work on normality, on the relationship between the normal and the pathological. This is something that is better known:

- life has its own order and does not depend on other sciences (vitalism, Bichat, for example).
- the singularities (there are only individuals), and even more so the exceptions, which seem to be a divergence between the typical and the individual (Claude Bernard), as if the divergence is a failure or a mistake,

must be conceived as differences. We are in the register of the anomalous (that which creates anomaly, i.e. inequality, difference) which much not be reduced to abnormality (without norm or outside the norm). This is where studies on monstrosity take place, with modern teratologists (since Geoffroy Saint Hilaire) showing that monsters teach us about more common regularities and that they have their own norms. There is no paradox in saying that monsters are “successes”. “Successes are delayed failures, failures are aborted successes” (Canguilhem 1991:160). In comparison with previous species, maybe the human race is one of these failures?

- we talk about pathology when a morphology “has a negative vital number, when its effects are assessed in terms of a defined milieu where certain duties of a living entity become inescapable” (Canguilhem 1991:163). Pathology is on the side of imbalance between individuals and their milieu: an individual, at a biological level or at social and psychological levels, can no longer adapt because the milieu is too inhospitable (too many viruses, too much stress, too much pollution, etc.). But it is important to remember that the milieu becomes an obstacle when the individual is tied to a fixed norm that the milieu cannot accept; there is no longer any mutual adaptation. Basically, every life is normal, but there are attacks capable of turning any normality into a pathology. The boundary is not between normal and abnormal (which is a cultural construct, cf. Foucault’s study of abnormal people (1999) but between normality (of each person) and poor functioning due to aggression from environmental elements.

This brings us back to the previous problem of the environment, but makes us think about it at a different level. Disability is not a question that involves the category of normal/abnormal, but far more that of singularity (“born like that” to use the title of Denise Legris’ book (Legris 1960), or *become like that*) and that of sequels to pathology (fixed or changing), on the understanding that, at all levels, *pathology is an imbalanced relationship between the individual and the milieu.*

New Epistemological and Heuristic Perspectives

I will be very brief, but this is very important. Aside from Canguilhem, the leading analysts of the 1960s and 1970s were looking for the hidden processes of society and of the individual. Nowadays – and I hope this will not be at the expense of questioning and suspecting – we are putting the spotlight on social productions, inventions, innovations, and on the effects that certain phenomena have on others. It is not that we are no longer looking for what is hidden from an initial or superficial examination, without which there would be no research. But we are less concerned by the perspective of finding elementary structures (or infra- or archo-structures) than in showing how things occur, shift, change, etc. In fact one should not push the opposition too far, as the main sociological and anthropological traditions have always had

these two sides, which have been used to varying extents depending on the period.

Today's shift in sociology might make for renewed research. From the deconstruction of systems we might move more towards looking at how they are constructed; not what they contain in terms of ruses, ideology, subconscious utility, but how they come into being and what changes they cause.

This sociological perspective is closer to history, which is not at first suspicion but reconstitution. I said we mainly owed it to Foucault (see Paul Veyne's text *Michel Foucault Révolutionne l'Histoire*, 1978), but of course also to the entire French school of history – Lucien Fèvbre, Marc Bloch or Fernand Braudel to Philippe Ariès.

I wish to stress the anthropological way of making history, and thus the contribution of ethnologists and anthropologists. We must recognize our debt to Mauss and Lévi-Strauss. But above all, it is through Robert Murphy (1987) that anthropology has come to have such a major influence on our own field. I believe that liminality is a very fundamental concept with which to account for the current situation (though perhaps constant throughout history) of the specificity of infirmity.

I wish to underline a contribution which, as a historian, I believe should be fundamental: that of Michel de Certeau.

First of all, it is de Certeau's epistemic outlook (1974) on history, its manufacture, its operation. In a manner which would require a lengthy commentary, he says that writing history is to put "a representation in the place of a separation", i.e. that history – though maybe the same might be said of all social sciences – continually encounters breaks, absences, silences, holes (such as psychoanalytical dialogue), and that the historian's narrative attempts to achieve continuity, or at least a certain seamlessness. But this involves the historical story narrative not being considered as reproducing reality, but as being close to fiction or myth. In a chapter entitled *The Historical Operation*, de Certeau (1974) shows the very concrete roots of historians (how they are limited by place – place in which history is manufactured by one's peers, by their dependence on techniques and on the use of sources, and by their confrontation with theoretical problems relating to "facts" and to models). The historian is in a very restrictive situation, but this is also what allows him to be, par excellence, a critical entity for other areas of knowledge and, above all, to pay attention not to objects and to universal items, but to significant differences, to singularities as limits to the thinkable, or (even) to the event, to the ruses of practices or to marginalities (de Certeau 1982). In the same way, historians are exposed to the ambivalent representation of the past and the future, the past being by definition that which *is flawed and which refers to the flaw of the future*.

We must strongly underline everything that these themes might evoke for us, when we are effectively faced with the singularity of disabled persons, with the gaping openness of our fear of alterity. For de Certeau, historians, like anthropologists and psychoanalysts, essentially deal with the other, with what is absent, thus with death and therefore – and this is not a paradox – with

sense. To think and to understand is not to reduce or to globalize; it is to increase the number of entrances and roads to knowledge.

Conclusion

It would be quite grotesque to write a conclusion for such a vast and open question as that examined here. One would have to list everything that has been left out, and then once again I would miss things. I must however mention the non-negligible contribution of both educational sciences and political sciences. Educational sciences have made numerous contributions: pedagogical methods; the understanding of complex impairments such as autism and cranial trauma; studies on parent-child relations and on sibship; insistence on certain labels and notions, such as those of special needs and inclusion, notions which are preferable to those of deficiency and integration (Plaisance & Chauvière 2000). This short list is by no means exhaustive. As for political sciences, they have thrown much light on the competences and models of public policies and thus of social policies relating to disabled persons (Chauvière 1997). They have given us the notion of systems of reference for public policy. This concept allows us to understand what types of conceptions of social relationships public policies call upon (relationships between citizens, between the State and citizens, between politics and economy, etc.). We must also mention legal studies, often linked to political sciences (Jobert & Muller 1987), which are now becoming important, even if in the field of disability there is not yet any theoretical research on social rights proper to disabled persons.

I have not painted a complete picture, but these few sketches might provide an idea of French preoccupations in relation to research on the matter of disability.

References

- Buton, F. (1999) Les corps saisis par l'Etat. L'éducation des sourds et muets et des aveugles au XIX^e siècle. Contribution à la socio-histoire de l'Etat (1789–1885) (Bodies seized by the State. The education of the deaf, dumb and blind in the 19th century. Contribution to the social history of the State (1789–1885), not available in English) (Political sociology thesis: EHESS).
- Canguilhem, G. (1952) *La Connaissance de la Vie (The Knowledge of Life)*, not available in English) (Paris: Vrin).
- Canguilhem, G. (1962) *Monstrosity and the Monstruous* (not available in English).
- Castel, R. (1988 [1976]). *The Regulation of Madness: Origins of Incarceration in France* (London: Polity Press, in association with Basil Blackwell).
- Castel, R. (1981) *La Gestion des Risques, de l'Anti-psychiatrie à l'Après Psychanalyse (Risk Management, from Anti-psychiatry to Post-Psychanalysis)*, not available in English) (Paris: Minuit).
- Castel, R. (2003a [1995]) *From Manual Workers to Wage Laborers: Transformation of the Social Question* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers).
- Castel, R. (2003b) *L'Insécurité Sociale (Social Insecurity)*, not available in English) (Paris: Le Seuil).
- Chauvière, M. (1997) L'insertion et ses déclinaisons, retour sur quelques référentiels des politiques publiques contemporaines (Insertion and its variations; a look at systems of reference for contemporary public policies), in: A. Blanc & H.J. Stiker (Eds), *L'insertion professionnelle des personnes handicapées en France (The Professional Insertion of Disabled Persons in France)*, not available in English) (Paris: Desclées de Brouwer).

- Conseil Français des Personnes Handicapées pour les Questions Européennes (2003) *Les principaux concepts européens: les mots pour le dire (The Main European Concepts: The Words Used, not available in English).*
- de Certeau, M. (1974) *Faire de l'histoire I Nouveaux problèmes (Making History I New Problems, not available in English)* (Paris: Gallimard).
- de Certeau, M. (1982) *La Fable Mystique XVI^e-XVII^e Siècles (The Mystical Fable – 16th and 17th Centuries, not available in English)* (Paris: Gallimard).
- Deleuze, G. (1988 [1986]) *Foucault, S. Hand* (Ed. & trans.) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).
- Ewald, F. (1986) *L'Etat Providence (The Welfare State, not available in English)* (Paris: Grasset).
- Foucault, M. (1965 [1961]) *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London: Tavistock, 1965).
- Foucault, M. (1983) An overview of work in progress, in: H. L. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Eds) *Michel Foucault, Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
- Foucault, M. (1999) *Les Anormaux (Abnormal People, not available in English)* (Paris: Hautes Etudes, Gallimard, Le Seuil).
- Gateaux-Mennecier, J. (1990) *La Débilité Légère: une Construction Idéologique (Slight Debility: An Ideological Construction, not available in English)* (Paris: CNRS).
- Giami, A. (1988) *La Figure Fondamentale du Handicap, Représentations et Figures Fantasmatisques (The Fundamental Figure of Disability, Fantastical Representations and Figures, not available in English)* (Paris: MIRE-GERAL).
- Giami, A. (1994) Du handicap comme objet dans l'étude des représentations du handicap (Disability as an object in the study of representations of disability, not available in English), *Sciences Sociales et Santé, Handicap: Identités, Représentations, Théorie*, 12(1), pp. 31–60.
- Goffman, E. (1961) *Asylums. Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (New York: Doubleday).
- Goffman, E. (1963) *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall).
- Jobert, B. & Muller, P. (1987) *L'Etat en Action, Politiques Publiques et Corporatisme (The State in Action, Public Policies and Corporatism, not available in English)* (Paris: PUF).
- Jodelet, D. (1991) *Madness and Social Representations* (London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf).
- Korff-Sausse, S. (1995) Le handicap, figure de l'étrangeté (Disability, figure of strangeness), in: M. Dayan (Ed.), *Trauma et devenir psychique (Trauma and Psychic Development, not available in English)* (Paris: PUF).
- Korff-Sausse, S. (1996) *Le Miroir Brisée, l'Enfant Handicapé, sa Famille et le Psychoanalyste (The Shattered Mirror, the Disabled Child, its Family and the Psychoanalyst, not available in English)* (Paris: Calmann Lévy).
- Legris, D. (1960) *Née comme ça (Born Like That, not available in English)* (Paris: Segep-Ken).
- Morvan, J. S. & Paicheler, H. (1990) *Représentations et Handicaps. Vers une Clarification des Concepts et des Méthodes (Representations & Handicaps: Towards a Clarification of Concepts and Approaches, not available in English)* (Vanves: CTNERHI et MIRE).
- Murphy, R. (1987) *The Body Silent. A Journey into Paralysis* (New York: Henry Holt and Company).
- Plaisance, E. & Chauvière, M. (2000) *L'Ecole Face aux Handicaps. Education Spéciale ou Education Intégrative? (Schools and the Disabled. Special Needs Education or Integrative Education?)* (Paris: PUF).
- Simondon, G. (1964) *L'Individu et sa Genèse Physico-Biologique (The Individual and his Physico-biological Genesis, not available in English)* (Paris: PUF).
- Stiker, H. J. (1999 [1982]) *A History of Disability* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press).
- Swain, G. & Gauchet, M. (1994) *Dialogue avec l'Insensé. A la Recherche d'une Autre Histoire de la Folie (Dialogue with the Insane. A Search for a Different History of Insanity, not available in English)* (Paris: Gallimard).
- Veyne, P. (1978) *Comment on Ecrit l'Histoire*, followed by *Foucault Révolutionne l'Histoire (How History is Written, followed by Foucault Revolutionises History, not available in English)* (Paris: Le Seuil).
- Vial, M. (1990) *Les Enfants Anormaux à l'Ecole, aux Origines de l'Education Spécialisée 1882–1909 (Abnormal Children at School: The Origins of Special Needs Education 1882–1909, not available in English)* (Paris: Armand Colin).