THE POLITICS OF BODILY DISABILITY

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Abstract

Our bodies determine our social selves, our social location. We in turn are determined by the constructed ideal or regulatory body, symbolizing society's ultimate values. It emerges from culture and in turn shapes and regulates the culture that gave it its life. It often inhabits the (perfect) gods of society, ancient and modern, and rules supreme, often to the point of tyranny as it vehemently upholds the cherished fabric of society. If a society cherishes body wholeness then the unwhole or disabled will be of almost no serious concern. This is true of ancient societies where people with disabilities were outcast. Modern societies with their focus on human rights are more humane and try to integrate the disabled into ordinary mainstream life. But even here the notion of the "normal" regulatory body stigmatizes the "abnormal," the disabled, so that their acceptance is constantly characterized by struggle. This kind of regulatory body needs to be deconstructed and replaced by a new and more inclusive symbol of bodiliness, the last which should at least resemble that all people are only temporarily abled.

Keywords: Body, Regulatory Body, Rhetoric, Disability, God

Introduction

"The corporeal is for people with disabilities the most real," says Eiesland (1994, 31). Other minority groups whose constructed "other" bodies (gays, people of colour, etc.) that evoke discrimination from their societies, can nevertheless continue with their lives without being left with an own body that is often a site of pain (Stuart 2000, 166). This confirms Leder's (1990, 76) notion of dysfunctionality. An "abled," healthy body becomes "absent," so much so that you are unaware of it. A "dys"-abled body reminds one constantly that you cannot take it for granted, you are intensely aware of your body. It is, however, not only the physical that engages a person with a disability's mind, it is markedly also the social, society's constructs of what they perceive disability to be, that painfully and constantly remind them of their "otherness."

Cognitive Science of the last few decades has convincingly substantiated the bodily basis of our cognition. At the basis of our conceptualizations, even our most abstract symbolizations, lies the body, it is always there (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1999). Apart from being an ever present phenomenon determining our "selves" and informing our cognitive capabilities, the body as such also begets symbolical or rhetorical value as it is construed as a social script. As "text" it confirms and re-establishes, or subverts its culture's identity (Perkins 1995, 172). It becomes a "speech act," a social or cultural script or even better, a "corporeal code" (Vorster 2002, 21). Onto and "into" these body-"texts" are written a society's values, often hidden (Vorster 2001, 441). As a language construction it informs, persuades and construes the adherents of a particular society into the proper bodies they

ought to be.[1] It offers them representations of cultural-specific subjectivities or self-understandings. It is especially the "regulatory body" that determines all others, and very much so the "other." It not only emerges from culture, but it in turn shapes and replicates culture. The regulatory body is invested with the ultimate values of a society, it becomes the symbol of a society's ideational perceptions.[2] It is the norm for all normality. It therefore begets an aura of objectivity, of naturalness or forever-(god-)given. This body is never questioned but all in the culture should live up to it, which they instinctively do. If you match the regulatory body you take up your privileged position in society, if not, you have to "know your place," determined by this norm. This regulative body is also called by other names: the ideal, the normative, the paradigmatic, the "vertical" (Malul 2002, 366).[3] In patriarchal societies it is the male body that is so idealized. In terms of our topic of disability, the regulatory body would be the normal, abled, perfect and whole body, calling into existence and highlighting immediately also the abnormal, the disabled, the imperfect and the unwhole. Although the regulatory body is often the hidden script in society it shows itself in the *persona* of the god(s), especially in ancient societies. The god (or gods) symbolizes the ultimate body! If Berquist (2002, 11) eloquently says "Watching the body is the same thing as observing society," then it is clear how much we can learn of a society's most cherished values by watching their gods (cf. below).

Symbolic bodies might be perfect and whole but real flesh and blood ones are not. In terms of disability, Stuart (2000, 167-168) rightly points out that we are all only temporarily abled and the older we become the further we move along the continuum to disability. This alone should question all efforts of marginalizing people with disabilities. If we are all in the same boat so to speak, how can we arrogantly disregard those that look and act a little different than the majority? But people's notion of the regulatory body ignores this and this construct is upheld even to the point of tyranny. Everybody has to bow before and serve this god, no questions asked. In what follows this god will be exposed as it shapes, governs and disciplines according to its (society's) will.

Disability among the Ancients

Quite the opposite from modern societies where there are indeed sincere efforts to integrate the disabled into mainstream life, the ancients segregated their disabled to the margins of life. This is the overall impression of a cursory glimpse into the ancient world. Having said this one at the same time finds disabled figures in quite unexpected strata in their societies, often occupying honorary positions of some sort. This confirms that societies, modern and ancient, are never neat and fully homogenous entities but always have an inherent "contradictoriness" (Overholt 1996, 8-9). But to describe the general fate of the disabled among the ancients as marginal, even outcast in the fullest sense of the word (Garland 1995, 28), is well-substantiated to characterize the miserable lives of these people.

Those who did not have whole bodies (the "other"), who did not meet the cultural expectations of its regulatory body, were regulated outside of the societal structure, to the liminal realm of anti-structure or dis-order. This is a banning from civilization to non-

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[1]   Therefore the body is a microcosm of the larger macrocosm, the body politic or body society.

[2]   Malul (2002, 454), although not referring to the body (or regulatory body) but structure, speaks of an ideational-superorganic structure that is translated into physical-geographical coordinates. The last becomes "ethereal" as much as the ideational structure. The regulatory body can be understood analogically to this superorganic structure.

[3]   Here he refers to the male body in comparison to the female (oblique) body.

civilization. In Israel you were forced outside the city gate, into the steppe or desert (the "wilds") where you as a deformed or disabled had to struggle for survival along with other social misfits like criminals, foreigners and many others socially suspicious (Malul 2002, 202). Even though alive you were regarded as socially dead, with no rights, no status, no protection, no identity. The disabled's unwholeness also desexed them, very much the same as a young initiand[4] before entering adulthood.

Who were the physically disabled of ancient times and how did they survive? It is not that easy to categorize the disabled neatly, not then and not today either. People who don't really have physical handicaps are nevertheless regarded as "deformed/disabled" and regarded as liminal *personae*. Women were regarded by Aristotle as "deformed males" (Garland 1995, 153) and an uncircumcised[5] male in Israel was an outsider. The ancients did get rid of deformed and unwanted infants. This extra economic burden would certainly have jeopardized the survival of the "fit" in the harsh circumstances of ancient times. The extent of infant killings is, however, difficult to determine. Many disabilities could also only be detected at a later stage (e.g., deafness) and such infants were allowed to live to adulthood. Having a look at the Israelite priestly code gives one an impression of who the disabled were: Lev 21:16-21 "[n]one of your descendants who has a defect may come near to offer the food of his God ... no man who is blind or lame, disfigured or deformed; no man with a crippled foot or hand, or who is a hunchback or dwarfed, or who has any eye defect, or who has festering or running sores or damaged testicles..." And barred from the assembly: Deut 23:1 "No one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the Lord." Although a limited list one can form an impression of who these luckless people were. It is remarkable that the same scrutiny of aspirant priests was conducted by the Greeks (and Romans), by means of a physical examination (*dokimasia*), to determine their wholeness and legitimacy (Garland 1995, 64; Vlahogiannis 1998, 19). There were few opportunities for the physically impaired in a world where raw physicality was of utmost importance for survival and most had to live as beggars off the charity of the well-to-do. There were laws for their protection (Lev 19:14; Deut 27:18; etc.), but laws more than often reflect ideal situations and not harsh realities. However, we do find some interesting exceptions where they could even make their mark.

Not all unwhole bodies were despised but quite often respected and held in awe and this paved the way for a better life for at least a few. People with disabilities were believed to have special powers, magical abilities. This is also true of modern times where in some pre-industrial societies the blind, for instance is elevated to a position of power as a "seer," able to "foresee" the future. In ancient Israel we have interesting examples of left-handedness which was regarded as a "defect." Throughout the ancient world "right" meant good, high (heaven), beneficial, strong and active and "left" was associated with weak, low (underworld), passive, mystery and markedly dangerous, treacherous and uncanny.[6] Even so, the left-hander Ehud rises to be a judge and uses his sneaky ability to kill the fat Moabite king Eglon. The story makes it clear that Ehud succeeds where no right-hander would have been able to (Judg 3:12-30). David uses a special corps of mercenaries, archers, who can comfortably (and believed magically) use both hands to practise their skill (1 Chr 12:2).

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4 "This is a salient feature of the denizens of the 'anti-structure,' their being perceived as neither males nor females, but rather straddling both categories in an ambiguous manner" (Malul 2002, 271, footnote 45). Cf. also footnote 11 later on.

5 It is ironical that the body must be mutilated to make it "whole," one of those anomalies of cultures (cf. Berquist 2002, 37).

6 Men were associated with the right and women with the left (Malul 2002, 319; Vlahogiannis 1998, 22).

Their treacherousness is also exposed as they side with David, the enemy of their own and king Saul's kin who are Benjamites (Berquist 2002, 34-35).

To get a deeper appreciation of the disabled it is worthwhile mirroring them against the perfectly abled, the god(s) which is the epitome of the regulatory or ideal body (Vlahogiannis 1998, 16). God (or gods) is the ultimate social-structural principle, the embodiment and personification of the ultimacies of a society – god is (the incarnation of) society! The god and his/her world is modelled upon the human social world (Malul 2002, 175, footnote 92; 288, footnote 99; 446; cf. also Vorster 2003). Observing the body to understand society (cf. Berquist above) becomes even more illuminating observing society's projections of its deepest values and convictions, its god(s). What did the Israelite god look like? The prohibition to make images of Yahweh (Exod 20:1)[7] complicates the drawing of his profile and the great variety of metaphors in the Hebrew Bible to "picture" him adds to this. Although seemingly body-less Yahweh nevertheless exhibits upper body functions such as speech, jealousy and anger but no lower bodily functions such as hunger, thirst and sexual activity (Eilberg-Schwartz 1990, 138, 193-194; 1994, 4, 77, 91). One should rather image him as "body-veiled." Whatever other images can be drawn of Yahweh, for the Israelites he symbolized "perfection." And this also explains the "perfect" priests (cf. above) chosen to serve him. If one struggles to visualize the Israelite god, look at the priests, they are the closest to him. Within this value system of bodily perfection one clearly understands the pushing aside of those who were not so perfect, who rather image the failure of the culture – they embarrass its expectations and were therefore to be kept out of sight. Measured against the flawless image of the god it makes sense that disability and deformity were often believed to be punishment from the god.

Taking a cursory look at Greco-Roman culture we find the disabled in more or less the same miserable, hopeless situation of being outcasts as shown above in Israelite culture. It seems as if the Romans were harsher towards their disabled than the Greeks.[8] The Greeks regarded their "imperfect" as aberrations of nature, whilst the Romans saw them as tokens of divine displeasure. Intersexuals were therefore easier accepted into Greek society than in Roman society (Garland 1995, 3, 57, 72, 86). The greater emphasis that Greco-Roman culture placed on physical beauty in comparison to Israelite culture where it is treated only incidentally (Berquist 2002, 22-26), would have made these deviating bodies also far more conspicuous. Their depiction in Greco-Roman art underlines their inferior status. One would usually find them portrayed in the "minor arts" (e.g., vase paintings), but rarely would a statue of the disabled be made except for mockery or some other dubious reason (Garland 1995, 121-122).

Amongst the blind, the deaf and the lame the last appeared to fare better in their struggle for survival. With at least their hands, eyes and ears available they could be utilized for some manual tasks (metal smiths, leatherworkers, and so on). The entrepreneurial amongst the disabled could secure for themselves a living of some sorts. The world of entertainment offered some opportunities to bards, musicians, poets and "clowns." The dwarfs and hunchbacks could make a living here. The Roman emperors were quite fond of surrounding themselves with these exotic, "grotesque" creatures. As seen above they were believed to

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[7]   Malul (2002, 287) points out the fear of the control of the god by capturing his image through gazing (cf. also the fear of the evil eye), similar to pre-modern people's fear of being photographed. This probably also explains the reluctance of Yahweh to supply his name to Moses (Exod 3:14), because to name/categorize is to control.

[8]   This is indirectly confirmed by Foucault (1985, 1986) who points out the greater anxiety about the body that took shape in Roman civilization in comparison to the more relaxed view amongst the Greeks.

have special powers. For many overlords these "slaves" also had an irresistible erotic attraction. They were allowed a lot of freedom in the emperor's court, typical of the court jester throughout the ages, but they were obviously not respected in their own right. Being the laughing stock of the influentials they ironically contributed to the upholding of the regulatory body. By laughing at the dwarf everybody else celebrates their "normality." The emperors were just as fond of surrounding themselves with exotic animals, putting the "monstrous" disabled on the same level (Garland 1995, 45-58).

As we have seen above with lefthanders which were regarded as abnormal, something like baldness would make you uneasy even if you're an emperor. Annoyed by the "deformity of baldness" Julius Caesar's laurel wreath that he wore proved to be a welcome escape (Garland 1995, 6). Contrary to today even obese women were regarded as "deformed." The reason for this was not aesthetical, but it was believed that an obese woman was sterile and could therefore not fulfill her primary function as child bearer (Garland 1995, 135).

And the Greek and Roman gods, did they alleviate the plight of the disabled? The god embodies the regulatory body *par excellence*: "The chief artistic inspiration throughout antiquity was the perfect human body, as exemplified by Apollo, that most Greek of all Greek gods, who is invariably depicted as a young man at the acme of physical fitness" (Garland 1995, 05). This clearly confirms the god as the ultimate structural-principle (cf. Malul above). But interestingly we also have gods who embody the anti-structural principle, the imperfect body. Hephaistos was a lame, clubfooted god. He was the fire-god, imaging one of the few occupations that were available to the lame, namely that of metal-working (smith). And intersexuals also had their god, namely Hermaphroditos. People cannot think and create other than in terms of their own bodiliness, also when they create their gods. But even though the imperfect had their godly representatives, this did not better their position. The marginalization of the lame here on earth was projected into "heaven," it was just as rife on Olympus. Here Hephaistos constantly experienced his outsider status amongst the other gods, the target of their humour and mockery (Garland 1995, 61-63), mirroring his followers' disability and helplessness. Does it help to have a god?

In ancient society the disabled were not only regarded as social misfits because of their functional incapacity in a physically determined world and consequently the economic burden they placed on society. Their misshapen bodies reminding of the wrath of the gods or embarrassing the well-shaped with their presence, were also not the only reasons why society pushed them aside. They were markedly also constructed as epistemic misfits, deep down they were perceived as "ignorants." This primarily prevented them from full social intercourse, full citizenship. The blind, deaf and lame (and all others) were regarded as having a deficient sensorium, relegating them to the sphere of the "unknown" (anti-structure) which ultimately inclines to "non-existence." With this focus on ancient epistemics, Malul (2002, 276) emphasizes the centrality of the body in conceptualization, the way we have a world by mediating meaning through the interaction of our bodies with our environment (Johnson 1987). In the ancient mind a blind or deaf man cannot "know." To "see" and "hear" is also to "know" and not being able to do this immediately qualifies you as "dumb." There must be eyes and ears to gather information (Plato and Aristotle; Vlahogiannis 1998, 27). In a performance culture these deficiencies are fatal, because such people cannot for instance participate in the legal process marked by a "...dynamic sensory load ... and practice" (seeing a crime, hearing a case, etc.) (Malul 2002, 171). And not only the "higher senses" participate in the epistemic process, but also the "lower senses" like smell (e.g., Gen 27:27), taste and touch (Malul 2002, 133). For the ancients even the sexual

organs are part of a person's *sensorium* (Malul 2002, 301, 310) to acquire knowledge: Gen 4:1 "And Adam *knew* (*yada*) his wife..."[9] This explains the banning of a man with damaged genitals from the social structure (cf. above). Such a person cannot "know" and fails to experience the world similar as if he is blind, deaf or mute and can therefore also not develop an identity. The high regard in which the Greeks held the special substance semen (containing form/essence and the woman as the receptacle hereof), reverberates with the epistemic importance of the penis in ancient Israelite circles. Eilberg-Schwartz (quoted by Malul 2002, 409) says it aptly: "One has to have a member to be a member."

Does Christian Theology Help?

The general stance that the church has traditionally adopted towards people with disabilities is that of pity and paternalism (Eiesland 1994, 20), without the sincere integration of the disabled into mainstream ordinary life. To a certain extent this is understandable, because the church more than often champions the cause and the protection of the regulatory body.

On what pillars does traditional theology rest in regard to disability? There are three, summarized by Eiesland (1994, 74) as follows: "sin and disability conflation, virtuous suffering and segregationist charity." The theme of sin as the cause of disability is clear in the Bible (e.g., Luke 5:18-26; John 5:14; 9:1-3, etc.) and clearly recalls the ancient belief of the wrath of the god manifested in disability. Disability also reflects badly on the perfect divine image (Lev 17-26; Heb 9:14). These irregulatory bodies should therefore be "healed" or "wholed" in miracle stories to measure up to the whole or regulatory ideal. In modern fundamentalistic church circles the riddance of all sin is usually the prerequisite before a "miraculous healing" can happen, and also the convenient escape when nothing happens (cf. Eiesland 1994, 116-118). If a miracle cannot do it then there are other ways, namely to become an "overcomer," that of silent endurance. Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor 12:7-10) is an often cited example of virtuous suffering. It is as if it is a question of: "Bear your cross, accept divine testing so as to receive heavenly rewards." Virtuous suffering, however, is the surest way to passivity, resignation and "institutionalized depression" (Eiesland 1994, 72). Segregationist charity aptly recalls the ancients' salving of the conscience of giving alms to the disabled. Charity has obviously improved the plight of the disabled, but the problem arises when homes, institutions and facilities for them are built out of sight. Instead of integrated into ordinary life they are segregated to the margins. Even though well-intended this style of charity is nothing else than an euphemistic version of the ancients' efforts to relegate their "abnormals" to the outskirts of society. Out of sight out of heart. It is clear that traditional theology is part of the problem and reinscribes the disabled's marginalized status and therefore aptly coined by Eiesland (1994, 70) as "disabling theology."

Does a liberatory theology fare better in regard to disability? Eiesland (1994, 22) utilizes the lived experience of disabled people to develop a liberatory theology of disability, and in this way does what most liberatory theologies do. Illuminating is her discussion of two disabled people[10] who remarkably live their lives as "normal," ordinary lives. By taking responsibility for their own lives they become integrated in society (Eiesland 1994, 31-48).

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9   De Beauvoir (quoted by Malul 2002, 338) says the following on the sexual organs: "The sex organ of the man is simple and neat as a finger; it is readily *visible* and often exhibited to comrades with proud rivalry: but the feminine sex organ is *mysterious* even to the women herself, *concealed*, mucous, and humid, as it is..." When having sex with a woman the man is "surveilling" (knowing) her and controlling her (cf. posture of copulation). At the same time he is being "known." Knowing, controlling and being known imply the creation of an identity.

10   Diane de Vries (congenital disability; born without arms and legs) and Nancy Mairs (developed multiple sclerosis at age 29).

This happens with the aid of bodily extensions (braces, wheelchairs) and a shared mutuality with other people close to them. The last is aptly described by Leder (1990, 94) as mutual incorporation, the extension and supplementing of our embodiment through that of others. In order to develop a new or alternative theology Eiesland (1994, 91) recognizes the need to create new or alternative symbols. Symbols (cf. regulatory body) are extremely powerful and effective in shaping society. She (Eiesland 1994, 100) reconfigures the symbol of Jesus as the suffering servant and conquering lord to that of the "disabled God": "In presenting his impaired hands and feet to his startled friends (Luke 24:36-39), the resurrected Jesus is revealed as the disabled God... The disabled God is not only the One from heaven but the revelation of true personhood, underscoring the reality that full personhood is fully compatible with the experience of disability." The symbol of the "disabled God" subverts not only the symbol of the passive Christ but markedly also the symbol of the regulatory, almighty patriarchal god whose image is impaired by the "weak" and "broken." The humaneness which this alternative body evokes is worked out further by Stuart (2000, 176-184) especially in regard to the sexual needs of the disabled. Her ideas on sex for single persons, masturbation, non-penetrative sex, the use of surrogates and impersonal sex workers are indeed liberating. To combat the "desexing"[11] of the disabled, her ideas hold the promise of "resexing" the disabled and paving the way to full personhood.

The emphasis on Jesus who embodies an alternative ultimate structural principle, an alternative societal voice and who eventually becomes "god" in the eyes of his followers (cf. Malul 2002, 175, footnote 92; 288, footnote 99; 446) seems sound. Jesus as the "resurrected disabled God," however, smacks of objectivism, that after all has been said the real truth is in fact "out there" somewhere. Stuart (2002, 168-169) following up on Eiesland's book and writing from the view of Radical Orthodoxy, aligns herself with this: "[b]ehind this density resides an even greater density ... all there is *only* is because it is more than it is." But how can this be ontologically checked, controlled other than being only a claim? Eiesland (1994, 102, 103), although emphasizing liberatory realism and active responsibility throughout her study, nevertheless covers for the divinity of Jesus Christ. Why still need a "God" if you have to survive on your own? She is critical of "miracles" ("laying on of hands"), but nevertheless accepts the miracle of the resurrection.[12] Focusing on responsibility and holding on to some objectivistic "truth" confuse. The last only leads to a renewed passivity and resignation. We cannot live without symbols (or "gods"), but must beware that we don't fall victim to the unsubstantiated claims of our own creations.

It is clear that a liberatory theology in comparison to traditional theology, especially with its emphasis on action, responsibility and humaneness in the struggle against society's established regulatory values, holds good promise for the "normalization" of the disabled. But we should beware the unarguable claims of old and new objectivistic regulatory images.

The Disabled in South Africa

Where the gods are absent or not so upfront, the regulatory body likewise fades into the background. Where the gods don't rule fanatically to keep the fibre of society intact, or put otherwise, where the tyranny of the regulatory body is subdued, one often (but not necessarily) finds a remarkable humaneness. Modern secular societies often outshine

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[11]   Stuart (2000, 166) points out the desexing of people with disabilities when it comes to toilet facilities: "Men," "Women," "Disabled."

[12]   Chopp in the Foreword of Eiesland's book (1994, 11) is aware of the problem of the literal interpretation of Jesus' resurrection, but nevertheless supports this new symbol as compatible with the experience of disability.

theocratic societies (now and before) when it comes to respecting human dignity. Human rights have therefore also dawned on the secular new South Africa. However, this does not mean that the regulatory body is not there. The construed regulatory body is always there. If the last symbolizes good and sound civilized values, then there is no problem. But if the regulatory body becomes a hammer, all others become the nails.

More or less 8.5% of the total South African population is people with physical and mental disabilities. This amounts to about 3.4 million people. There are good and sincere efforts to integrate people with disabilities into mainstream life. Our *Constitution* (Law 108 of 1996) protects the rights and dignity of disabled people along with many others who were in the past the victims of discrimination: "The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, *disability*, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth" (cf. *Constitution*, chapter 2 Bill of Rights, article 9 [3]). People with disabilities' rights are inscribed into many other laws, *inter alia* the Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998) along with a *Disability Code* (2004, 1-7) where the focus is on the reasonable accommodation of the disabled's needs in the workplace, affirmative action to have them appointed and also their "retention." The focus is now not only on their human rights and dignity but also on their capacities, whereas earlier the focus was usually on their limitations. Laws circumscribe in great detail the access of the disabled, access to buildings, public spaces, transport, employment opportunities, sport and recreation and so on.

However, if good laws are not implemented they become meaningless. It is ironical that even government departments often have to be forced by law to adhere to their own laws. What lies behind this paternalistic attitude, this attitude of non-accountability, of so many in leading positions nowadays? Obviously many things, but the stupefaction of the regulatory body is quite clear. If the regulatory body shapes people into little, power drunk "gods" who decide in a whimsical way when, how and if ever things need to done, then it needs to be deconstructed, to break its tyrannical hold on society.

Conclusion

People with disabilities in ancient societies lived miserable, outcast lives even if a few managed to secure for themselves more livable lives in mainstream society. But even those few were mostly tolerated, "enjoyed" for providing exotic entertainment for their overlords or perceived to have special powers which could benefit their owners. The disabled were pushed to the anti-structure and regarded as socially dead, even non-existent. To have had an imperfect body compared to the "normal"-bodied society, added up to being a no-body. The gods did not help them either because they represented the ideally "abled" of society. Being societal constructs they became useful instruments to regulate societal life. Even those few imperfect gods in the Graeco-Roman *pantheon* only reinscribed the marginal status of the disabled. Modern traditional theology, although sympathizing with impaired people, does little to integrate them into ordinary life. Liberatory theology with its accent on responsibility and action fares far better in this regard. Modern secular societies with their emphasis on human rights have good integrative instead if segregationist agendas for their disabled citizens (e.g., South Africa). But leaders must practise what they preach, concretize good laws dynamically or risking a slipping back into the life of antiquity.

"Our body, able-bodied or disabled, is our social self, our social location..." (Vlahogiannis 1998, 33) has hopefully been illustrated and confirmed by the above. Our

construct of the ideal, regulatory body, informs us how the body society should be regulated. Our notions of the regulatory body influence us subtly to apply *physiognomics* as our forebears of old. Therefore we expect a dwarf to be playful and cunning, a giant to be dumb and slow and the disabled generally to be mentally/intellectually "deficient." We should resist these and other myths presented to us by our society's regulatory body (god). We should get rid of it if it becomes tyrannical. It is after all only our own human creation.

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