

CONCEPTUAL ENGINEERING

Online Seminar 2021

#06 | Shelley Tremain (Biopolitical Philosophy)

Engineering (The Apparatus of) Disability

Abstract

Philosophers generally regard impairment and disability as naturally disadvantageous human characteristics or properties that certain people embody or possess, that is, generally regard impairment and disability as self-evident, non accidental, and politically neutral phenomena. In recent years, however, some philosophers have challenged this individualized, naturalized, and medicalized understanding of disability, helping to consolidate an area of philosophy that I initiated and for which I coined the name “philosophy of disability.” For example, some of these philosophers assume the tenets of a dominant model of disability, namely, the British social model of disability, which makes an ontological distinction between impairment and disability, arguing that although impairments are prediscursive and thus politically neutral human characteristics, disability is a pervasive form of social disadvantage imposed upon “people with impairments.” As I have pointed out in various contexts, the British social model of disability is structurally analogous to both the feminist sex-gender distinction and its predecessor, Claude Lévi-Strauss’s nature-culture distinction. Like feminists who challenge the prediscursive and universal status conferred upon the category of sex in the sex-gender distinction and the category of nature in the nature-culture distinction, I have worked to denaturalize impairment, the putatively prediscursive and universal foundation of the British social model’s impairment-disability distinction. In this presentation, I will provide a snapshot of my work on the problematization and naturalization of disability in philosophy, paying particular attention to how an individualized and medicalized conception of disability is naturalized in feminist philosophy and feminist bioethics.

The **Conceptual Engineering Online Seminar** series is co-organized by the Department of Philosophy of the University of Zurich and the Arché Philosophical Research Centre at the University of St Andrews. The meetings take place on zoom every Tuesday at 4-6pm Swiss Time/3-5pm British Time, from September 14 to December 14, 2021 (with 14 sessions in total).

Organizers

Manuel Gustavo Isaac
& Kevin Scharp



WEB DETAILS

Zoom meeting ID: 675 8251 8255

Password: CEOS21 (invite link)

YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/c/ConceptualEngineering