



Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body

Lennard J. Davis

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In this highly original study of the cultural assumptions governing our conception of people with disabilities, Lennard J. Davis argues forcefully against “ableist” discourse and for a complete recasting of the category of disability itself.

Enforcing Normalcy surveys the emergence of a cluster of concepts around the term “normal” as these matured in western Europe and the United States over the past 250 years. Linking such notions to the concurrent emergence of discourses about the nation, Davis shows how the modern nation-state constructed its identity on the backs not only of colonized subjects, but of its physically disabled minority. In a fascinating chapter on contemporary cultural theory, Davis explores the pitfalls of privileging the figure of sight in conceptualizing the nature of textuality. And in a treatment of nudes and fragmented bodies in Western art, he shows how the ideal of physical wholeness is both demanded and denied in the classical aesthetics of representation.

Enforcing Normalcy redraws the boundaries of political and cultural discourse. By insisting that disability be added to the familiar triad of race, class and gender, the book challenges progressives to expand the limits of their thinking about human oppression.

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