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Peter Cryle, Elizabeth Stephens. *Normality: A Critical Genealogy.* Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2017. 440 pp. $35.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-226-48405-1.

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In *Normality*, Peter Cryle and Elizabeth Stephens aim to broaden current understandings of the concept of normality that go beyond the generally accepted binary of the normal versus the abnormal. It traces the development of the concept of what is "normal" from 1820 up to 1950. The research is based on a diverse range of mostly medical disciplines, such as psychiatry, psychology, sexology, psychoanalysis, and public health. Drawing from a series of extensive and thought-provoking case studies from Europe and the United States that range from criminal anthropology to craniometry, anthropometrics, sociology, and eugenics, the authors argue that contemporary notions of normality emerged in the first half of the twentieth century as a result of the rise of consumer culture within democratic capitalist societies, which centered on self-management and individual improvement. They provide compelling evidence that challenges Michel Foucault's theory of normalization, which views the discourse on normality as born out of the nineteenth century's prevailing philosophical and political ideas about discipline and punishment that gave birth to the asylum and prison systems.

Cryle and Stephen persuasively argue against the dominant discourse of normality, which rests on its normative function in producing conformity, with its tendency to interpret the notion in narrow and repressive terms, thereby ignoring the inconsistencies in the temporal and spatial developments of the concept. In stark contrast to existing research on the subject, the authors take a genealogical approach and lay bare the contradictions inherent in the notion of "normality" as an ideological trope, evidencing the multiple and often conflicting meanings of the concept. The authors move away from a single, dominant narrative about the development and normative function of the normal. Instead, they lay out a much more contested history in which the term could often hold different values that diverge from its assumed connotations, demonstrating that the development of knowledge about the "normal" is characterized by its looseness rather than its fixed purpose based on supporting existing systems of power and privilege. The use of the term has a relatively short history, only becoming an authoritative term of everyday use in the middle of the twentieth century as an ideal to aspire to. Prior to this, it was mainly used within medical discourse to denote good general and physiological health.

In *Normality*, Cryle and Stephens attempt to go beyond the simplification of existing critiques, arguing against Foucault's concept of normalization, challenging the normative element of what it means to be "normal" as a standardizing practice, to take into account highly contingent interpreta-

tions relative to each discipline. The authors demonstrate that the term was not exclusively used in the context of punishment and discipline, but instead, for example, also in the development of standardized body sizes for mass production in the clothing industry. With the rise of mass culture from the 1950s onward, flexibility and adaptability have been the core elements of the concept of "normality."

The theory of normality involves both normalization and individuation, and its development is linked to business activities in consumer mass culture such as the commercial use of anthropometric measurements and psychometric data, which went beyond medical and political discourses of power to be used for purposes outside of disciplinary institutions. The authors provide a much more complex and nuanced understanding of the history of the concept through the portrayal of its multiple and often divergent meanings in modern history. These include the inconsistencies that serve to provide an alternative and more fluid understanding of the development and purpose of the concept of normal, which has not entirely been negative; the notion of normality did at times express more benign ideas throughout its admittedly brief history.

This intellectual and cultural history is presented coherently in a form that makes the scientific debates that have been conducted in a wide range of fields over a period of two hundred years accessible to nonspecialists. It provides compelling evidence of the problematic nature of the concept of "normality," which lacks a consistent and unified history—something the authors claim recent scholarship has failed to take into account. The findings fill a gap in recent studies, which did not delve into the multifaceted processes or contradictions that gave rise to modern interpretations of the theory of normality, which cannot merely be understood as a tool of oppression to enforce morally endorsed ideals. The breadth and depth of this research would appeal to practitioners in a variety of health fields and to students requiring an introduction and investigation into the development of the notion of "normal"; the research will also be of interest to those working in interdisciplinary contexts such as cultural and medical humanities, as well as those within critical disabilities, mad, race, and queer studies.

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