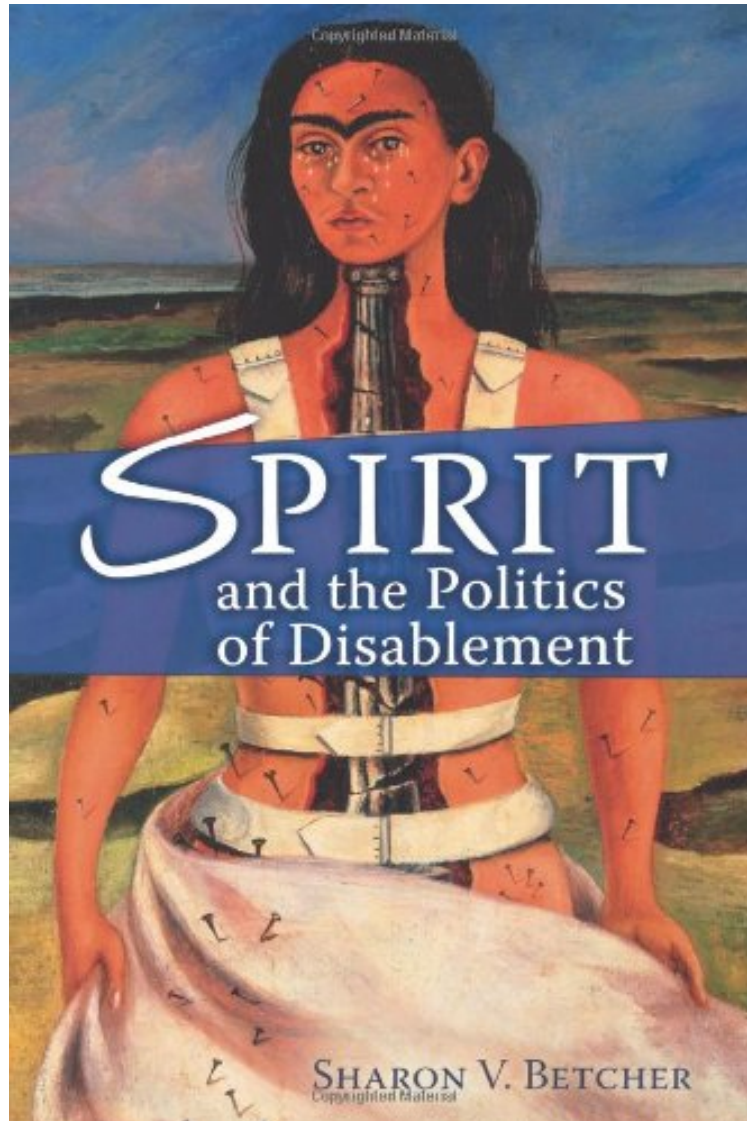


(Download) Spirit and the Politics of Disablement

## Spirit and the Politics of Disablement

Sharon V. Betcher

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**Sharon V. Betcher : Spirit and the Politics of Disablement** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Spirit and the Politics of Disablement:

2 of 7 people found the following review helpful. writing to confuse not to clarifyBy Carolyn BartlowThis is not a book for the average reader. You need an extensive vocabulary in both theology and philosophy to read this book. The sentence structure frequently requires the ability to diagram complex sentences to enable you to begin to unwind complex sentence structure to make sense of what you are reading. After dipping into various parts of the book I

decided that the content was just not worth the struggle.<sup>2</sup> of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great Book, Also a Wonderful Reference

By Ferrari Jones Sharon Betcher's *Spirit and the Politics of Disablement* is a nuanced deconstruction of the optics implemented in the western world to codify and institutionalize stock conception or response to disablement that undermines the agency of the one observed or "helped." For the most part Betcher is stressing the Foucauldian idea of the gaze, and holds fast to the motto that what hierarchical power wants to subordinate it firsts makes visible. *Spirit and the Politics of Disablement* shows the myriad amount of manifestations of an oppressive transmission of attention from hegemonic systems and their elites to those considered disabled, transactions either blatant or cloaked in humanitarian, political, or medicinal ideological clothing. Betcher constantly stresses the conflation of Western liberal Christianity with modern medicine in its linear, eschatological conceptions of the human body and its potential wholeness. Wholeness, for Betcher, is not something natural to the human body or the human mind but a social construct that is specific to time and place. Betcher implements the example of an infant who sees itself in the mirror, and subsequently develops a feeling of incompleteness as it cannot have its mirror self at hand at all times. Throughout history, and more notably in the last three hundred years, this anxiety revolving around the completed self is part and parcel of another, more classical and existentially considered anxiety, that of finitude itself. Betcher's conclusion is that modernity is slowing reaching the point of a continual hyper critique of the real, or a hatred for life because of the telos of technology and media pointing to perfection impossible, and perhaps not desirable, for humans. These eschatological yearnings come from many places, and Betcher does a fantastic job sketching out their trajectory. One place in particular where her critique of wholeness is most striking is within scripture, and subsequently concerning contemporary scholars of the historical Jesus. One example of Betcher's discourse around the issue is concerned with the work of John Dominic Crossan and his conceptions of the egalitarian super structures he saw Jesus embodying and attempting to transmit. Betcher recognizes that the sentiments of equality and compassions are obviously of import, but still challenges Crossan's conception of Jesus because it seems as though Jesus is still placed above the ones he is helping, and that his healing touch is a tad too hegemonic and imperial. This is perhaps the most radical example of her critique, but it extends to countless other examples throughout the first half of the book. While I found myself very much engaged and excited throughout the first half, I was left with a very large question that I would like to ask Betcher. I understand her critique of the historical Jesus scholars, but like all of the best critiques, it left me wondering what could possibly be an adequate reading of these healing stories? I simultaneously yearn for her explication and caution myself, for in Betcher's model of thought if I desire to have some "closure" or "wholeness" then I am actively or passively participating in a social construct concerning problematic conceptions of potential and fulfillment. My eschatological yearnings aside, if I were to construct a Betcher-esque reading of the healing stories I would have to find a way to show that they emphasis alterity and agency- without falling into the traps of perpetuating traditionally undisputed claims to normalcy. The second half of the books answers all these questions and then some, focusing a lot on Deleuze. Buy this book if you are interested in any of these topics!

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great thoughts, muddled articulation

By William Bradford I read this book for a graduate-level theology of the body class. As a person with a disability this book is loaded with good ideas. However, it gets muddled down by over-citation. The introduction alone had over 100 citations. Each citation is relevant, but I would have liked to hear more of Betcher's voice than direct quotes from a plethora of scholars. This book reads like a dissertation run amok. However, if one can weed through all the referential material and academic lingo, it offers a useful analytic for examining disability and religion.

In this remarkable and incisive work, Sharon Betcher analyzes our world and God's embodied presence in the light of her own disability and the insight it affords. She claims disablement as a site of powerful social and religious critique and reflection. With searing honesty, she reveals how our culture, only recently tolerant and supportive of disabled people, still fears them. The presence of disabled persons stands as a rebuke to our images of body and health, to the distorted values of our consumerist culture, and the globalized economy that embodies those values in unjust structures. Yet, Betcher claims, disablement has also revealed powerful alternative understandings of the body and body politic, in Scripture, in the actions of Jesus, in the healing work of the Spirit at work in the world. Brimming with insight, Betcher's work is a revelation and a bracing challenge to all Christians.

About the Author Sharon V. Betcher is Associate Professor of Theology at Vancouver School of Theology, British Columbia. Ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, she has spoken and written extensively about disability and theology.