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Section 1

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Gen S 420 Assignment #2

**The Ancient Era:**

In the section of *Ancient Era*, the evolution of the treatment of individuals with disabilities is gradually introduced. In the beginning, the different ways that ancient people explained the world around them is described; more specifically, the correlation that they made with Ancient Gods is emphasized because that was their way to logically make sense of their surroundings. Since there were minimal ways to research or document history during that time, many people did not know why things were the way they were. Therefore, things such as seizures were referenced as having a religious connection because that was the only thing, they were capable of understanding without fully knowing if it were true or not. The introduction of philosophers also plays a major role in this article. According to the article Hippocrates, also referred to as the “Father of Medicine”, opposed the religious connection of seizures and was dedicated to proving that they were caused by natural reasons. Aristotle professed about the evolutionary inferiority of woman compared to men and the creation of a law banning infants with deformities to be allowed to live. The treatment of children with disabilities in the ancient times was extremely inhumane. They were humiliated by being utilized as forms of entertainment, publicly executed and abandoned by their own parents. Moving forward in time, as Christianity became more commonplace, society began to be more willing to help and minimized discrimination towards the disabled community. Those with different traits faced a multitude of challenges, one that is primarily emphasized in this article is the harsh living conditions. Despite them being treated inhumanely, they were also critically limited by the unfortunate circumstances they dealt with daily such as sickness, unhygienic living conditions, etc.

**The Middle Ages:**

According to the article, in the 5th Century all Europeans encountered the fall of the Roman Government which caused a ripple of hardships. During the Middle Ages, the idealism of God was heavily upheld and as a cause of this appraisal, the first asylum was created by an archbishop from Milan named Datheus. This asylum was established to care for abandoned infants, although many of them did not survive by the unhygienic conditions. The article also explains that leprosariums, after the decrease of leprosy, were utilized as institutions that housed abnormal human beings such as orphans, psychotic individuals, widows, prostitutes, etc. Another form of housing people that were different, that the article expresses, is a thing called, “Idiot Cages.” These cages emphasized how inhumane the treatment of those who were not considered socially equal. Continuing the topic of discrimination towards people with disabilities, the article also describes an event that became known as the “Ship of Fools,” where families would pay sailors to send off those individuals that had a deformity to lessen the burden on the family. These boats were said to travel port to port displaying these individuals as entertainment in exchange for an admission charge in other words, currency. According to the article, these ships would abandon their passengers, the individuals with disabilities, in random ports to survive on their own. However, in the 1300s a new movement sparked in Europe called “The Renaissance” which shifted the focus from religion to the arts and sciences. With the forthcoming of this cultural movement, many advances in medicine were discovered which also included a deeper understanding of disability. Furthermore, politics was more involved in helping those with disabilities by the passage of what the article refers to as the “Elizabethan Poor Laws.”

**17th and 18th Century:**

At this point in history, the social knowledge of disability is slowly more evolved than it was in the previous two articles. Philosophers were one of the major influences during the beginning of these two centuries. The eagerness to learn about human nature was an ideal that led great philosophers, such as Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, to advance the development of psychology. In addition, the interest in educating those with disabilities continued to grow in society. According to the article two important events influenced this growth. These events consist of “deaf mutes” being taught to communicate through sensory motions by an educator named Jacob Rodriguez Pereire in Portugal and individuals who were blind being taught to read by a man named Valentin Hauy. The great philosophers of this time, Locke and Rousseau, influenced what became known as The French Revolution which emphasized the worth of each human being—disabled or not—as opposed to primarily focusing on wealth or status. Philip Pinel revolutionized the treatment of several individuals who were thought to be “mentally deranged.” He was responsible for the transition from inhumane, “prison-like” treatment as stated in the article, to a gentle and patient environment in two major asylums. Jean-Marc Gaspard Itard was highly influenced by many philosophers and educators of this time, he himself attempted to put those theories to the test by experimenting with a boy that was said to be raised by wolves. Although his experiment was a flop, he was able to prove that children with mental retardation have the potential to get better. Despite all the advancements in science, ideals and culture, the stigma in regard to disability remained. The article emphasizes this when it discussed Malthus’ idea of population versus food scarcity.

**Personal Response:**

After reading all the articles, I feel shocked that I have not been aware of several of these events. The treatment of people with disabilities throughout time has been extremely cruel and its saddening that the societal ideals in regard to these individuals was so condemning. It was also highly intriguing to learn about those educated individuals who took it upon themselves to look further into the stigma of disability. One event that was extremely inhumane to me was “The Ship of Fools” because I could not imagine families feeling that one of their family members is a big enough burden to sell them off to some stranger. These articles have made me come to the realization that the treatment for individuals with disabilities, although the process has been evolving painfully slow over time, has had many tipping points that are significant to note. I had never made the correlation of the theories of several great philosophers to the transformation of the idealism towards individuals with disabilities. These articles have definitely morphed the way that I think about the history that I have learned throughout my academic career. Another global event that was referenced with a correlation to the disability community was the French Revolution. I was very fond about the inclusion of those with disabilities with the overarching purpose of this upraising and the emphases they made on the value of each human being disregarding materialistic and physical prejudices. I feel as though just by reading about the cruel treatment of people with individuals, that with the unnecessary hardships they had to endure and the closedmindedness of society back then, I can’t help but feel a sense of embarrassment in being a human being.

**Relation to Class:**

These articles have a definite connection with what is discussed weekly in this course. Concepts such as legislation, culture, discrimination, different beliefs and institutions are major points of discussion in this class which also make an appearance in these three articles. In terms of legislation, we have discussed policies such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), etc. The ultimate goal of all the policies that have been established in favor of individuals with disabilities is to not only create a more accessible society but also reduce the social stigma attached to disability. On the other hand, these articles listed several legislations one of which were the creation of the “Elizabethan Poor Laws” that revolutionized the way individuals with disabilities were treated and expanded the resources they can access. Furthermore, the societal view on disability was discussed in the articles as condemning and burdensome. These pieces of writing also described the evolution of the transformation of these social perspectives which is a concept that has been professed in class. We have learned in class about the inhumane treatment in asylums and care facilities that was also one of the major focuses of the articles. Additionally, we have discussed the concept of ableism in class which is one of the things that is highlighted in the articles when they were describing the different ways that individuals with disabilities were discriminated. One excellent example that was listed in the articles were the “Idiot Cages” or the “Ship of Fools.”