Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political ‘double bind’, which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures

(Foucault, 1982, p. 216; original emphasis).

This chapter considers some of Foucault’s conceptual tools (Foucault, 1977a; Allan, 1996) for understanding how power is exercised upon individuals and how they are subsequently constrained to behave in particular ways. However the aspect of Foucault’s work which has the most exciting potential for inclusion is his somewhat neglected writings on ethics and these are dealt with in greatest detail here. Foucault’s ethics allows us to envisage individuals as capable of transgression, enabling them to challenge disabling barriers and find new selves, new ways of being in the world. This is important, because, as has been suggested so far, whilst we can attempt, following Deleuze and Guattari and Derrida, to work on the mainstream, and on society in an attempt to make them more inclusive, this is an awesome task and it may take some time before evidence of change is seen. In the meantime, there may be some value in helping individuals to find forms of tactical defiance and resistance and new ways of existing in a disabling and exclusionary world. Foucault’s ethics also enables those of us involved in providing or promoting inclusion, whether as teacher, other professional, researcher or teacher educator, to identify the work we might do on ourselves to ensure the success of the inclusion project. It also enables us to consider how we might support disabled students’ transgressions.

FINDING FOUCAULT, POWER AND KNOWLEDGE

I think I have in fact been situated in most of the squares on the political checkerboard, one after another and sometimes simultaneously: as anarchist, leftist, ostentatious or disguised Marxist, nihilist, explicit or secret anti-Marxist, technocrat in the service of Gaullism, new liberal and so on. An American professor complained that a crypto-Marxist like me was invited in the USA, and I was denounced by the press in Eastern European countries for
Foucault, like Derrida and Deleuze and Guattari, sought to defy categorization of himself as one kind of scholar or another. He is indeed something of a contradiction, issuing enjoinders to study power and knowledge at its roots, for example in schools and hospitals, whilst remaining largely at a structural level in his own analysis. He died of complications arising from Aids and, it is suggested, as a result of practising his own ‘limit experiences’ (Miller, 1993, p. 29) but his writings constitute an important legacy. Foucault’s initial interest was in structures and discourses and in his archaeologies of knowledge (Foucault, 1972), of medicine (1973) and of madness (1967), he demonstrated deftly how discourses produced the ‘restitution of truth’ (Foucault, 1967, p. 197; original emphasis). In the Birth of the clinic (ibid, 1973), for example, Foucault traced the development of medicine, illustrating how the gaze opened up a ‘domain of clear visibility’ (p, 105) and the hospital provided a regulated space in which medical knowledge was acquired, recorded and passed on through the rituals of teaching.

In Foucault’s shift from archaeology to genealogy, the focus of his work moved from discourses to institutions such as prisons, schools (1977a), and to sexuality (1978; 1985; 1986), where, in his genealogies, he uncovered how knowledge and power were interlinked and constructed individuals as objects of knowledge and as subjects who were controlled, even - and perhaps especially - by themselves. His analyses overturned understandings of modern phenomena, driving home the realization that where we might think we have greater freedom, we are, in reality, more tightly constrained than ever before. In Discipline and punish (Foucault, 1977a), for example, a detailed and morbid account of a regicide being hung, drawn and quartered in the eighteenth century is followed by a portrayal of an equally detailed, but apparently more benign regime of imprisonment almost a century later. Foucault invites us to consider that the removal of the physical punishment as a spectacle has, in fact, led to a more insidious form of control over individuals’ bodies and their souls. His analysis is extended to education and the ‘disciplinary regimes’ which turn young people into ‘docile bodies’ (Foucault, 1977a, p. 138).

Foucault developed a series of constructs about power and knowledge which he offered as a useful ‘box of tools’ (Foucault, 1977a, p. 208) for understanding how individuals were controlled and constrained. The most important of these is ‘the rather shameful art of surveillance’ (ibid, p. 172), a disciplinary technique for ensuring individuals were sorted, regulated, normalised and made to behave in particular ways. Foucault identified three ways in which surveillance was undertaken. First of all, hierarchical observation was a means of making it possible ‘for a single gaze to see everything perfectly’ (ibid, p. 173). Physical structures were created, based on Jeremy Bentham’s panoptican design, to ensure maximum scrutiny of people:

to render visible those who are inside it . . . to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them (ibid, p. 172).