

The Meaning of Ability and Disability

Joel Michael Reynolds

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL

ABSTRACT: I argue that the foundational question of continental philosophy of disability is the question of the meaning of ability. Engaging a range of canonical texts across the Western intellectual tradition, I explore three hermeneutic pathways toward this question, concluding with a discussion of its larger sociopolitical and philosophical stakes.

KEYWORDS: philosophy of disability, continental philosophy, disability studies, history of philosophy, ableism

“Bodily forth [das Leiben] is co-determined by my being human in the sense of the ecstatic sojourn amidst the beings in the clearing [ekstatischen Aufenthaltes inmitten des gelichteten Seienden] . . . the limit of my bodily forth [Grenze des Leibens] changes constantly through the change in the reach of my sojourn [die Wandlung der Reichweite meines Aufenthaltes].”

—MARTIN HEIDEGGER, *Zollikoner Seminare* (1987)

“For any lived body, the world appears as the system of possibilities that are correlative to its intentions. For any lived body, moreover, the world also appears to be populated with opacities and resistances correlative to its own limits and frustrations. For any bodily existence, that is, an ‘I cannot’ may appear to set limits to the ‘I can.’”

— IRIS MARION YOUNG, *on Female Body Experience* (2005)

“Life. . . is at the same time the nucleus [*le noyau*] of being and of non-being . . . but this ontology discloses not so much what gives beings their foundation as what bears them for an instant towards a precarious form [*ce qui les porte un instant à une forme précaire*].”

—MICHEL FOUCAULT, *The Order of Things* (1973)

Disability has been a topic in multiple areas of philosophical scholarship for decades. However, it is only in the last ten to fifteen years that philosophy of disability has increasingly become recognized as a distinct field. Its forerunners, pioneers, and first-generation knowledge-builders—I am thinking especially of Eva Kittay, Adrienne Asch, S. Kay Toombs, Susan Wendell, Anita Silvers, Fiona Kumari Campbell, Kim Q. Hall, and Shelly Tremain, among others—raised consciousness about disability as a focal and generative site of philosophical inquiry by demonstrating its centrality to, if not foundation for, multiple long-established philosophical fields. These range from social and political philosophy to phenomenology, normative and applied ethics to philosophy of law, and feminist philosophy of all stripes.

Despite receiving different types of philosophical training and engaging significantly different types of literatures, philosophical and otherwise, these scholars demonstrated over and over again that a concept, debate, problematic, literature, or entire field was in fact grounded in an implicit understanding of human ability and disability. In addition, they demonstrated that, if guided by a thematic concern about disability, critical inquiry into this grounding would further our understanding of it—sometimes through annulment, other times through enrichment, and yet other times through disruption. Given this breadth of import and depth of impact, one might rightly ask: what defines the philosophy of disability as such? What distinguishes inquiries taken under this moniker as opposed to others?

My aim in this essay is to answer this question with respect to continental approaches to the philosophy of disability. I argue that the foundational question of continental philosophy of disability is *the question of the meaning of ability*. I then explore three pathways toward this question, which I articulate in terms of the *verdict* of bodies, the *bind* of bodies and worth, and the *dogma* of individual ability. These are moments and claims in what could be called the negative dialectics of ableism, a dialectics that must be retraced and reconstructed if we are to even begin asking the

question of the meaning of ability. As I hope to show, unlike the question of the meaning of being, this is not simply a problem of forgetting but instead a problem of cruelty and dehumanization.

In short, I argue that the idea that bodies carry, contain, or articulate moral judgments, or verdicts, forms the constitutive logic of ableism, that which *makes* “disability” in contradistinction to “impairment.”¹ The verdict of bodies is, in turn, made possible by the presumed *bind* of, that is, the normative force between, bodies and worth. And this binding is itself made possible by the *dogma* of individual ability: the principle and ensuing ontological framework that situates abilities in individuals and thereby obscures the fundamental relationality of ability.

The Question of the Meaning of Ability

In the dialogue *Crito*, amid an argument meant to defend and exalt heeding the opinions of the wise, Socrates asks, “and if [a disciple] disobeys and disregards the opinion and approval of the [wise] one, and regards the opinion of the many who have no understanding, will he not suffer evil?” “Certainly he will,” responds Crito. “And what,” Socrates asks, “will the evil be, whither tending and what afflicting, in the disobedient person?” “Clearly,” Crito answers, the evil will be “affecting the body [*sōma*]; that is what is destroyed by the evil.”² Among the many hermeneutic leitmotifs sedimented by the canonized history of Western philosophy, this scene reveals a foundation. Bodies bear judgment. Whether in shape, state, quality, movement, expression, or transformation, the body is evidence of moral things unseen.

Just a few lines later, Socrates asks, “Is life worth living with a body that is corrupted and in a bad condition [*mochthērou kai diephtharmenou sōmatos*]?” Crito’s reply, which the reader can easily anticipate, places the nail in the rhetorical coffin: “*in no way*” [*oudamōs*]. The corrupted, bad body is a sign of evil. And for Socrates, or at least for Plato’s Socrates of *Crito*, it can function as a sign of not just any evil, but the evil of not heeding wisdom and knowledge. The body that is not able in this way and due to these reasons, Socrates argues, is a body judged and judged in such a manner that it negates, empties out, or otherwise annuls life’s worth. To draw upon a different ancient wisdom text, let us not forget that the last thing Satan takes from Job is his bodily “health.” That action is meant to be the

final straw *demonstrating* that God had forsaken—which, in effect, is to say, judged—Job. The potent logic linking one’s body to thetic judgment would also not be lost on Jesus just before his death on the cross. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (*Elōi, Elōi, lema sabachthani?*), he yelled out, quoting Psalm 21, only to be met with divine silence amid extreme torture leading to death.³ The body bears judgment.

It is not an overstatement to say that this thesis amounts to an original theory of inequality. Differences between bodies, whether decided before or at birth or over the life-course, *indicate* worth and value.⁴ That is to say, bodily differentiation itself is taken to be an articulation of judgment. Levinas was quite clear on the import of this problematic assumption, speaking of “the notion of worth” as one “whose dimension is so difficult to distinguish from the being of entities.”⁵ Insofar as “corrupted, bad bodies” can render even the examined life not worth living and insofar as the definition of the “corrupted, bad” body shifts according to, but is never disarticulated from, a given episteme and a given epoch’s production of power, we have here an original theory of inequality inscribed directly into the flesh. Insofar as such judgments set conditions on what *should* be possible for one, this is a theory of inequality that delimits *access* to life in the name of, under the veneer of, the good life. This is an ultimate principle made in the dead of night.

I have argued that the abilities of the body articulate the judgment of a life and that this judgment conditions its possibilities. It is instructive here to consider Kafka’s *In the Penal Colony*.⁶ Before the condemned man’s crime is written on his body, the body is its very writing. The machine in the penal colony only makes explicit what the body already told. The condemned man is a soldier who is being executed for insulting behavior and disobedience of a superior, for *not listening to* the wisdom of one who, by virtue of his social position in a military context, is perforce taken to be wise. Kafka immediately and uncannily lays bare the logic binding a body to worth, describing the condemned man at the outset as a “stupid-looking, wide-mouthed creature [*stumpfsinniger breitmäuliger Mensch*] with bewildered hair and face.”⁷ I do not read Kafka as describing the body and look of the condemned man as much as he is demonstrating the reasons for his treatment. The man’s body and look are evidence of his disobedience; his disobedience a result of his body, who he *is*. His body at one and the same time pays the price of his moral failure and shouts out that the price be exacted. For those who live in bodies considered to be “corrupted and in a bad condition” by society at large, this is painfully obvious—and too often

to the point of death. The body is the crime; the crime, the body.⁸ This idea underwrites the many logics of eugenics—whether mass incarceration, genocide, or forced sterilization, and so on. Borne not for an instant, but a lifetime, such forms of life experience the verdict of bodies not just in the particularity of their being-in-the-world but in the structures assumed to bear it out.

The Verdict of Bodies

“Life,” Foucault writes, “is at the same time the nucleus [*le noyau*] of being and of non-being,” yet “this ontology discloses not so much what gives beings their foundation as what bears them for an instant towards a precarious form [*ce qui les porte un instant à une forme précaire*].”⁹ If life, the nucleus, or, put better, *nexus* of being and nonbeing is the name of that phenomenon which bears beings, for an instant, toward a precarious form—it follows that such precarious forms can in turn bear life. That is to say, we reserve the phenomenon of life to apply precisely and only to those beings whose precarious form we understand to be capable of bearing it. This is not a tautology—it points to the judgment that must be made about form and the precarity of form with respect to those beings we deem capable of harboring or exhibiting that curious quality we name ‘life.’ It is not just that Socrates held the precarity of certain forms of life, certain forms of human bodies and minds bearing life for an instant, to be too precarious to bear life well. He thought that their failure to bear it well demonstrated that they *should* not bear it at all, never bothering to substantively ask about the social and political conditions that supported or failed to provision and bear that life in the first place. This is the normative germ of ableism at the heart of the canonical West.

I can now formulate an initial clarification of the question guiding this inquiry: *the question of the meaning of ability is inextricable from the question of the verdict of bodies*. Among the many verdicts that have fallen under the twilight of modernity, this verdict has yet to receive its nightfall. As Reiner Schürmann put it in his seminal, posthumous *Broken Hegemonies*,

For more or less a century, more than one nightfall has descended upon the primary facts. I believe that the nightfalls still need to be retraced. Since when—and above all in what manner—did an

undertow in these facts draw them toward their ruin? All that European humanity has made of itself in the first half of the twentieth century, and all that it is in the process of doing to itself on a planetary scale in the second half that makes darkness so familiar to us, must have distant and profound origins. These are good enough reasons to suspect philosophers of shady dealings. Have they, perhaps, always received a return on their ‘principles’ from dealings carried out in the dead of night?”¹⁰

From the Middle Passage to the Shoah to centuries-long genocides against Indigenous Peoples across the globe, from the War on Terror to Latin American death squads to detention camps currently on the United States’ southern border, it is the judgment that certain types of bodies are worthless or worth-less-than-X that is trotted out as justification. Such bodies are already taken to bear and bear out the judgment they will receive. Across history, the returns on this idea have been wildly profitable . . . for some.

To overturn the verdict of bodies is not simply to overturn a latent naturalism or materialism at the heart of thinking about embodiment. This verdict, this idea about bodies, is not merely a claim about what is; it is ultimately about the link between what is and well-being.

The Bind of Bodies and Worth

While I find Socrates damningly wrong and in multiple ways, he carved the matter at its joints: to think about the body philosophically is always already a normative matter. To think about the body is to think about the condition of the possibility of not just being but being *so*. It is at this jointure that even the pluralist history of philosophy betrays its social and political limitations. There is a persistent need to designate that which constitutes the human and, thereby, institute forms of sociopolitical representation—an academic, abstract way to refer to the allocation of group power, not least of which is a given group’s claim to a “monopoly of the legitimate use of violence within a given territory,” to invoke Weber.¹¹

And there is a shortcut that the vast majority of these thinkers have taken to avoid the question of the meaning of ability: the idea that *some lives are not worth living*. This is the single greatest boon to ableism. This idea, it ever bears repeating, is typically leveraged via a simple logic: lives not worth living

are lives of particular or constitutive pain, suffering, and disadvantage.¹² To put it crudely, there are few rhetorical moves easier to discharge moral deliberation than linking that which is different to that which is difficult, the vanilla catch-all for pain, suffering, and disadvantage. The bind of bodies and worth decides access to life through a calculus of hedonic friction, through the theticism that *some* precarious forms are not meant to bear life by virtue of their putative suffering, lacks, or disadvantages. To perform this calculus and underwrite this theticism, an understanding of *how the body should be* is always already at work.

Take the following example: while calling into question the contingent role of the body for fundamental ontology, Michel Henry writes, “If the relationship *sui generis* of the body to consciousness instead proves to be the foundation of our idea of contingency, and more fundamentally, of the very fact that such a contingency and even contingent facts in general are possible for us, then does not this relationship truly constitute a *structure*, which is not only rooted in human nature, but which must further serve to define it?”¹³ For Henry, it is the relationship of the body to consciousness that grounds the experience of possibility itself. Embodiment, in other words, is the condition of the possibility of the experience of possibility. The problem with this level of analysis is that it misses the way this structure depends upon its outside—such a structure must be relational and thereby social and thereby value-laden. It is a structure only insofar as it is de-structured or, put better, de-con-structed by that which is outside it.

For beings like us, there is no such thing as ontogeny or phylogeny—no such thing as perception, apperception, recognition, or recollection—without what Fanon called *sociogeny*: the mutually reciprocal interplay between the natural and the social, the seen and the seen as, the found and the founded, an interplay that renders each term perennially porous to the other.¹⁴ There is no ultimate way bodies are. There are only regional ways we conspire them to be so. Henry’s analysis, then, misses the fact that the *sui generis* relationship of the body to consciousness is constituted through a differential logic of the value of one’s own body and the value of its various discrete possible engagements with the world. And this logic cannot but be normative.

On this point, I would like to quote Fiona Kumari Campbell at length, a scholar whose work has not received nearly enough attention:

Activists with disabilities have placed great trust in the legal system to deliver freedoms in the form of equality rights and protections

against discrimination. Whilst such equalisation initiatives have provided remedies in the lives of some individuals with disabilities, the sub-text of disability as negative ontology has remained substantially unchallenged. We need to keep returning continually to the matter of disability as negative ontology, a malignancy, a body constituted by what Michael Oliver terms ‘the personal tragedy theory of disability,’ wherein [...] ‘disability is some terrible chance event which occurs at random to unfortunate individuals.’ Disability is assumed to be ontologically intolerable, inherently negative. Such an attitude of mind underpins most claims of social injury within the welfare state and is imbricated in compensatory initiatives and the compulsion towards therapeutic interventions. The presence of disability, I argue, upsets the modernist craving for ontological security.¹⁵

The “bad, corrupted” body is one whose worth is judged thoroughly, one whose worth is certain enough to end or curtail its own possibilities. This is so above all else because the verdict of bodies assumes that bodies are the sorts of thing that can be lacking.

Within the Western philosophical tradition, and in stark contrast to the more diverse cultural history of both Western and non-Western traditions, the meaning of disability has been defined in just one manner: lack or privation.¹⁶ For example, Aristotle writes in the *Metaphysics*,

Blindness [*tuphlotēs*] is a privation [*sterēsis*], but one is not blind at any and every age, but only if one has not sight at the age at which one would naturally have it. Similarly a thing suffers privation when it has not an attribute in those circumstances, or in that respect and in that relation and in that sense, in which it would naturally have it [*ekhē pephukos*].—The violent taking away [*biaia aphairesis*] of anything is called privation.¹⁷

Speaking of one with paralysis, Locke writes, “everyone pities him as acting by necessity and restraint.”¹⁸ In his *Lectures on Anthropology*, Kant argues “infirmity of the mind [*Gebrechen des Gemüths*] is just such a crippled state [*krüppelhafter Zustand*] of mind, as infirmity of the body is a crippled state for the body. Infirmities are not hindrances of the powers [*Kräfte*] of mind, but a lack [*ein Mangel*], but the latter exists when the condition for the regular use of the powers [*regelmäßigen Gebrauchs der Kräfte*] of mind

is lacking.”¹⁹ Or, consider Mill’s (in)famous claim about happiness and satisfaction: “better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied.”²⁰ “Fool” has many meanings in late nineteenth-century English, a primary one of which picks out people who we would today term “intellectually disabled.” Read in that manner, Mill is here arguing that a *lack* of intelligence—one form of a “bad and corrupted body”—is categorically worse than not having that lack. It is so even if resulting in happiness.

From this admittedly cursory sampling of the manner in which some canonical figures in the Western philosophical tradition conceive of disability, a theme emerges: the bind of bodies and worth is accomplished through lack. It is made, in other words, through what Campbell calls a *negative ontology*. This insight reveals the problem of general analyses of embodiment: the general structure of the body, the total set of “I cans” that give it a general definition, is constituted by a negative ontology—by the infinity of “I cannots” that set it in relief. Yet, the idea of bodily lack does not arise from the body alone; it arises in relation to and with others and one’s world. This idea only takes grip if one is certain, if one has both existential and epistemic “ontological security” about what one should be able to do in general and in any given specific context. Yet, insofar as abilities are fundamentally relational and those relations are fluid, such security is more often than not misguided.

If, then, bodies carry verdicts only on the assumption that bodies can be lacking, then what establishes lack in the body? What creates the distance in the span of which one would place a bind joining body and worth? Is it perhaps that this distance is necessary? That it is unthinkable for much of the history of moral and political thought that simply *being here* is enough? Unthinkable that bodily difference articulates difference in ways, not worth? I’ll now turn to argue that this binding is made possible by the dogma of individual ability, which is to say, the principle that situates abilities in individuals and obscures the fundamental relationality of ability.

The Dogma of Individual Ability

What does it mean for a body to lack, to be without, to be deficient? What logic of bodies gives such claims sense? Take again the examples discussed above from Aristotle and Kant. Aristotle invokes the concept of the “natural” and Kant the “regular.” Blindness is a privation (*sterēsis*) insofar as

one does not have sight in those situations and ways in which one would *naturally* have it (*ekhē pephuko*). Infirmity of the mind is a lack (*Mangel*) by virtue of lacking the *regular* use of the powers (*regelmäßigen Gebrauchs der Kräfte*) of mind. One cannot understand the concept of privation without that of the natural and of natural having or capacity, just as one cannot understand the concept of lack without that of the regular and of the regularly used—another way of thinking “natural capacity.” There is, of course, much more to be said here, not least of which concerns the complicated meaning of “to have” (*ekhō*) and “to use” (*gebrauchen*) as well as Kant’s specific invocation of “powers” (*Kraft*). Even with such hermeneutic concerns in mind, it is clear that neither Aristotle, nor Kant honestly asked the question of the meaning of ability, for they simply assumed that abilities, or at least certain ones, are properties and judgments of individual bodies. Yet, it is precisely that question that lays out the path to genuinely inquire into the relations between a body and worth.²¹

Whatever a body is, bodies neither *have* abilities, nor do they *use* powers. Bodies don’t have or use such things because abilities and powers are fundamentally and necessarily relational. If there is such a thing as *the* ableist fallacy, it is the idea that abilities are individual, that individual bodies “have” abilities.²² “Ability” is a concept that picks out the relations of body and context, and once one sees it so, the idea of a direct bind between body and worth and the idea of the verdict of bodies is shown to be both unfounded and ethically deplorable. Any given form of life is no less and no more than the conduct of a web of abilities, a web and a form that is, by virtue of life’s ebbs and flows, gatherings and dispersions, interdependencies and interrelations, *precarious*.

For all of the ink and blood spent over being, over what it is taken to be, or not, and the *ways in which* it is taken to be so—or not; for all of the ink and blood spent over the body, over what it is taken, governed, policed, damned, and despaired to be—or not; and for all the ways in which it is in fact taken up, lived out, and reacted to for being so—or not—few have seriously asked the question of *what bears us for an instant toward a precarious form*. If, as Foucault provocatively suggests, “life” is the name we give to the conditions of this precarious form and the questions it poses to us, then philosophy of disability focuses upon one of life’s primary and essential determinates: ability and disability. Across disparate cultures and epochs, this bearing has acquired numerous names: character, disposition, skill, quality, having, holding, bearing, being, capacity, power, force, and, in

the idiom I have here adopted, *(dis)ability*. What distinguishes continental philosophy of disability is the way in which it takes this bearing and these determinates to pose a *question*, a question that cuts to the very core of what it means to be beings like us: the question of the meaning of ability, which is always also to say, the question of the meaning of disability.

One cannot speak of a purposive being without invoking ability and disability or their many cognate concepts. One cannot speak of the human animal or any number of nonhuman animals and kinds without invoking the dialectic of its fit with the world and the world's fit—or *misfit*—with it.²³ The idea that abilities are one's own is proof of an ableism that demands a verdict of my body, demands it be ever bound to worth, and demands allegiance to the dogma of individual ability.

The path to the question of the meaning of ability will remain untrod as long as ableism demands these ideas of us. Wherever that question leads, we will find ourselves stuck in eugenic dead-ends until the verdict of bodies, the bind of bodies and worth, and the dogma of individual ability are refused and overturned. Bodies are neither veridical, juridical, or onto (theo)logical. Bodies indeed bear us for an instant toward a precarious form, but this is a form whose instants are decided before all else by the supports we demand for our shared precarity.

NOTES

1. For the purposes at hand, I am bracketing what *makes* impairment, which is to say, the way that “impairment” as a descriptive—and normative—category of bodies is produced in a given historical and cultural context. On this question, see especially the oeuvres of Fiona Kumari Campbell and Shelley Tremain.

2. “Crito,” Plato, *Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 47e.

3. Matthew 26:46, Wayne A. Meeks and Jouette M. Bassler, *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, 1st ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).

4. Although the examples above focus on what are taken to be *negative* differences (corruption, affliction, disease, etc.), this holds as well for positive differences. I expand on this at length in chapter five of Joel Michael Reynolds, *Ethics after Ableism: Disability, Pain, and the History of Morality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming).

5. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Martinus Nijhoff Philosophy Texts (Boston: M. Nijhoff, Kluwer Boston, 1981), 198n. 12.

6. Franz Kafka, *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971).
7. Kafka, *The Complete Stories*, 140.
8. Mark Sherry, *Disability Hate Crimes: Does Anyone Really Hate Disabled People?* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010).
9. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 278.
10. Reiner Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, trans. Reginald Lilly, Studies in Continental Thought (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 3.
11. Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972).
12. Joel Michael Reynolds, "'I'd Rather Be Dead Than Disabled'—the Ableist Conflation and the Meanings of Disability," *Review of Communication* 17, no. 3 (2017).
13. Michel Henry, *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1975), 2.
14. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008).
15. Fiona Kumari Campbell, "Inciting Legal Fictions: 'Disability's' Date with Ontology and the Ableist Body of Law," *Griffith Law Review* 42 (2001): 43.
16. Joel Michael Reynolds, *Ethics after Ableism: Disability, Pain, and the History of Morality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming).
17. Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols., Bollingen Series (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 2:1615/022b27–22. In the spurious *Sense and Sensibilia*, it is also commented that "of persons destitute from either sense, the blind are more intelligent than the deaf and dumb" (437a15–17).
18. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Niddich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), Bk. 2, Sec. 9, Lines 20–21. Cf. Stacy Clifford Simpican, "The Capacity Contract: Locke, Disability, and the Political Exclusion of 'Idiots,'" *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 2, no. 1 (2014).
19. Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Anthropology*, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant in Translation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 113/25:554. "Gebrechen des Gemüths sind eben ein solcher krüppelhafter Zustand des Gemüths, als Gebrechen des Körpers ein krüppelhafter Zustand für den Körper sind. Die Gebrechen sind keine Hinderniße der Gemüths Kräfte, sondern ein Mangel, dieser aber ist, wenn die Bedingung des regelmäßigen Gebrauchs der Kräfte dem Gemüth fehlt." Immanuel Kant, Kant's gesammelte Schriften, Abteilung 4, Vorlesungen, Bd 25 (IV/2), *Vorlesungen über Anthropologie*, rev. Reinhard Brandt and Werner Stark (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1997), 554.
20. John Stuart Mill, *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. 10 (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006), 212.
21. As Stacy Clifford Simpican has noted in the more narrow context of political theory, "Because so much of political theory premises political inclusion on human capacity, we should expect disability to have been part of the conversation

about political subjectivity all along, even before political theory took up the question of identity politics.” Stacy Clifford Simplican, “The Capacity Contract: Locke, Disability, and the Political Exclusion of ‘Idiots,’” 90.

22. Joel Michael Reynolds, “The Extended Body: On Aging, Disability, and Well-Being,” *Hastings Center Report* 48, no. 3 (2018). To be clear, to say that abilities are relational is not to answer the question of the meaning of ability. It is only to begin, however tentatively, on the way to that answer.

23. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept,” *Hypatia* 26, no. 3 (2011).

WORKS CITED

- Aristotle. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*. Bollingen Series. Edited by Jonathan Barnes. 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- Campbell, Fiona Kumari. “Inciting Legal Fictions: ‘Disability’s’ Date with Ontology and the Ableist Body of Law.” *Griffith Law Review* 42 (2001): 42–62.
- Clifford Simplican, Stacy. “The Capacity Contract: Locke, Disability, and the Political Exclusion of ‘Idiots.’” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 2, no. 1 (2014): 90–103.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 2008.
- Foucault, Michel. 1973. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. 2011. “Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept.” *Hypatia* 26, no. 3: 591–609.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1987. *Zollikoner Seminare: Protokolle, Gespräche, Briefe Herausgegeben Von Medard Boss*. Edited by Medard Boss. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin. 2001. *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols, Conversations, Letters*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press.
- Henry, Michel. 1975. *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*. The Hague: Nijhoff.
- Kafka, Franz. 1971. *The Complete Stories*. Edited by Nahum N. Glatzer. New York: Schocken Books.
- Kant, Immanuel. 2012. *Lectures on Anthropology*. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant in Translation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. 1981. *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Martinus Nijhoff Philosophy Texts. Hague; Boston: M. Nijhoff; Kluwer Boston.

- Locke, John. 1975. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. Peter H. Nidditch. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Meeks, Wayne A., and Jouette M. Bassler. 1993. *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. 1st ed. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Mill, John Stuart. 2006. *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. 10. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund.
- Plato. 1997. *Complete Works*. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Reynolds, Joel Michael. 2017. "I'd Rather Be Dead Than Disabled"—the Ableist Conflation and the Meanings of Disability." *Review of Communication* 17, no. 3: 149–63.
- Reynolds, Joel Michael. 2017. "Merleau-Ponty, World-Creating Blindness, & the Phenomenology of Non-Normate Bodies." *Chiasmi International* 19: 419–34.
- Reynolds, Joel Michael. 2018. "The Extended Body: On Aging, Disability, and Well-Being." *Hastings Center Report* 48, no. S3: S31–S36.
- Reynolds, Joel Michael. *Ethics after Ableism: Disability, Pain, and the History of Morality*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, Forthcoming.
- Schürmann, Reiner. 2003. *Broken Hegemonies*. Translated by Reginald Lilly. Studies in Continental Thought. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Sherry, Mark. 2010. *Disability Hate Crimes: Does Anyone Really Hate Disabled People?* Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010.
- Weber, Max. 1972. *Politics as a Vocation*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Young, Iris Marion. 2005. *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays*. Studies in Feminist Philosophy. New York: Oxford University Press.