

Applying Merleau-Ponty's Account of Perceptual Practices to Teaching on Disability

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Introduction

Embodiment is rarely conceived of as central for teaching and learning in philosophy classes. What would happen if we made embodied habits – such as perceptual practices regarding disability – an explicit concern in the classroom?¹ How could philosophical frameworks on perceptual practices inform classroom activities to prompt students to recognize ableism and disablism? Which philosophers could be productively used to construct a framework to apply to such a task? In this paper, I will explore these questions. I contend that existential phenomenology, as formulated by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Linda Martín Alcoff, provides insights regarding the habitual formation of perceptual practices that are useful for thinking about ways that perception may be informed by ableism and disablism. Perceptual practices matter because they inform how we treat other people as well as our positions on public policy.² This paper provides suggestions for educators who desire to learn about or are already committed to challenging ableism and disablism. As philosophy teachers, we have the opportunity to facilitate student reflection regarding disability, which enables students to make decisions about whether to retain their habitual ways of comporting themselves toward disabled people or to begin the process of forming new perceptual practices.

Few theorists have engaged in any kind of sustained discussion of the usefulness of Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology for theorizing disability.³ In “Stirring Up the Sediment: The Corporeal Pedagogies of Disability,” Jessica Cadwallader draws on Merleau-Ponty's discussion of habit, as well as Alcoff's application of his discussion of habit to racial perceptual practices, in order to provide an account of the ways that cultural narratives about disability may shape perceptions of disabled people.⁴ Cadwallader uses insights from Merleau-Ponty and Alcoff to clarify how it is possible for ableism and disablism to be sustained as the *status quo* without reflection.

In this paper, I focus on Cadwallader's account of perceptual practices regarding disability and her attempt to apply this framework to teaching on disability. I think that Cadwallader's theoretical framework is useful for making perceptual practices regarding disability explicit. However, I contend that Cadwallader's goal of disrupting and re-sedimenting students' perceptions of people with disabilities is simply not feasible, especially in the span of two classes, as she

attempts. In addition, her pedagogy seems to focus only on the perspectives of able-bodied students, raising the concern that the perspectives of disabled people are marginalized in her activity. Finally, her paper does not make clear what motivates students to commit to the process of reflecting upon and gradually altering their perceptual practices.⁵

I argue that an approach to teaching about disability that thematizes perceptual practices regarding disability and takes experiences of disabled people into account would be more effective than the one Cadwallader describes. I recommend setting a goal that is less ambitious than Cadwallader's and thus more feasible: namely, to give students the conceptual tools to make choices regarding their perceptual practices. In addition, I advocate incorporating narratives from disabled people to provide understanding of particular experiences of living with impairment, including what it is like to live within a context that marginalizes disabled people and "constitutes their own bodily being as a problem."⁶ Since changing perceptual practices requires a long-term commitment, students must be sufficiently motivated to make changes. Understanding the ways that they may contribute to or work against the marginalization of disabled people may provide students such motivation. This groundwork needs to be in place before it even makes sense to argue that students ought to consider changing their perceptual practices in regard to disability.

I proceed by first detailing Cadwallader's theoretical framework on perceptual practices and disability that informs her teaching on disability. After that, I critique Cadwallader's classroom practices on the basis of three closely related difficulties. Last, I provide suggestions for classroom activities on disability that take into account the diversity of experiences of disabled people and help students reflect on their perceptual practices.

(Dis)Abl(e)ism and Habitual Perceptual Practices

In this section, I will give an account of Cadwallader's theoretical framework, which serves as the basis for her teaching on disability, in order to show how Alcott's and Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology is useful for thinking about, and getting students to think about, perceptual practices concerning disability. Prior to discussing Cadwallader, it is necessary for me to define briefly two concepts that are central to this paper. I adopt Veronica Chouinard's definition of *ableism* as "ideas, practices, institutions, and social relations that presume ablebodiedness, and by so doing, construct persons with disabilities as marginalized."⁷ Practices informed by ableism privilege able-bodied people by centering on their needs and experiences. For example, it may be assumed that everyone can stand and walk with ease, hear, and comprehend social cues. I believe that it is important to make a conceptual distinction between ableism and disablism.⁸ When theorists, including Cadwallader, use "ableism" without providing a definition, it is sometimes unclear to

which of these closely related phenomena they refer. *Disablism* consists of beliefs and practices that inferiorize and/or discriminate against people with impairments or who are thought to have impairments. Neither ableism nor disablism requires malevolence; in fact, I would suggest that inferiorization of disabled people often coexists with good intentions. Both ableism and disablism are manifested in practices—this paper focuses primarily on perceptual practices—in ways that may make detection difficult insofar as these practices are often taken to be natural or inevitable. Indeed, this is one reason that drawing attention to and challenging ableist and disablist perceptions of people with impairments continues to be an important function of disability activists and critical disability theorists. I will now turn to a discussion of Cadwallader's paper.

Cadwallader contends that the teaching practices of universities tend to be premised on Cartesian dualism, and, consequently, adult education focuses on the minds of students without considering the role of bodies for teaching and learning. According to Cadwallader, it is only by recognizing the bodily aspects of learning that educators can grasp the wide range of possibilities present in the classroom. She claims that “what is at stake in a student's entry into the classroom is not simply the ideas they have, or their knowledge, or their styles of thought, but their being-in-the-world.”⁹ Here she adopts Merleau-Ponty's use of “being in the world,”¹⁰ which designates the situatedness of human existence; we never exist outside of a situation.¹¹ According to Merleau-Ponty, there is no divide between the subject and her world; the subject comes to be and exists within a human, physical, ideological, and moral situation. On Cadwallader's account, learning can affect how students are situated in these regards. Embodiment is central for being in the world. Furthermore, the assumption that particularities of one's body, (e.g., having or lacking an impairment) impact one's experience and understanding of the world is implicit throughout Cadwallader's paper.

Being in the world is malleable, yet its fluidity decreases through a process Merleau-Ponty terms “sedimentation.” This notion is central to Cadwallader's discussion. Merleau-Ponty characterizes sedimentation in the following:

Similarly, there is a world of thoughts, a sedimentation of our mental operations, which allows us to count on our acquired concepts and judgments, just as we count upon the things that are there and that are given as a whole, without our having to repeat their synthesis at every moment.¹²

In other words, we do not begin anew in each act of perception. Rather, on this account, we have a background that has been formed through previous perceptions, concepts, and judgments. He goes on to describe that which is sedimented, (in this case, his apartment), as a “familiar domain.”¹³

Through habits of movement and thought, being in the world becomes sedimented. In this way, concepts, judgments, and perceptions become the taken for granted background that informs perceptual practices.

Cadwallader maintains that it is important for students to recognize the ways in which their being-in-the-world has been shaped, rather than taking it to be simply given or natural. She argues that “disability troubles a range of ‘common sense’ assumptions, and in so doing troubles students’ habituated styles of being-in-the-world.”¹⁴ Here I take Cadwallader to be suggesting that ableism, in the sense of presuming ablebodiedness, tends to be uncritically accepted by students and influence their bodily comportments, thoughts, and actions. Let’s consider a couple of examples of encounters between nondisabled and disabled people that diverge from normative expectations. A businesswoman may be unsure what to do when she puts her hand out in anticipation of shaking a businessman’s hand, only to realize that his arm is impaired in a way that prevents him from shaking hands. In a different scenario, a man may be surprised or insulted when he tries to make small talk with a deaf man in front of him in line at a bank and gets no response. I take Cadwallader to be suggesting that encountering people with disabilities can interrupt the normative ways of being that students take to be natural. Yet, simply encountering people with disabilities is generally insufficient to prompt questioning of perceptual practices *precisely because* ableism and disablism tend to be taken for granted.¹⁵ For this reason, it is necessary to thematize perceptual practices in order to expose the ways that ableism and disablism may inform interactions with disabled people rather than simply arranging for able-bodied people to interact with disabled people.

Cadwallader draws on Alcoff’s discussion of racialized perception to illustrate how ableism (what I term disablism) can inform perception rather than resulting from it. I will discuss Alcoff’s account of racialized perception prior to considering Cadwallader’s application of this account to perceptual practices and disability. Alcoff argues that while racial classification is, to an extent, based upon perceivable differences, racism also enables, “the recognition of particular kinds of difference as visible and racially meaningful.”¹⁶ Racism brings particular kinds of difference to the forefront (i.e., ones that support racist ideologies). Alcoff gives these examples: “A fear of African Americans or a condescension toward Latinos is seen as simple perception of the real, justified by the nature of things in themselves without need of an interpretive intermediary of historico-cultural schemas of meaning.”¹⁷ In these instances, racialized perceptions are conceived of as natural and unmediated rather than shaped by cultural narratives regarding particular races. In other words, racial stereotypes *inform and reinforce* particular ways of perceiving rather than being *derived from* perception. This need not be an intentional undertaking; once ways of seeing are sedimented, they tend to function without awareness. Alcoff suggests that if racism decreases, the salience of racialized features such as skin color, hair texture, and facial features would also decrease.¹⁸

I agree with Cadwallader's claim that ableism (what I would term "disablism" due to the inferiorization component) influences perception in a similar way. She contends that the characterizations of "disability as lack, as broken, as tragedy, as incapacity, as failure, as pitiful, as proximate to death are revealed to be the result of dominant, common-sensical perceptual practices."¹⁹ These disablist ways of thinking about disability make certain types of embodiment and modes of moving and communicating noticeable and meaningful. The expectation that people with disabilities are incapable, pitiable, and tragic victims can inform how one perceives disabled people. For example, one may take note of anything a disabled person does that may serve to confirm these stereotypes while dismissing evidence to the contrary. However, these perceptions may seem to be, in Alcoff's words, "justified by the nature of things in themselves without need of an interpretive intermediary of historical-cultural schemas of meaning."²⁰ Thus, recognizing that historical-cultural schemas of meaning inform perception is an important and difficult task. A reduction in (dis)abl(e)ism would reduce the salience of features indicating impairment; they wouldn't matter in the ways that they do currently.

In this section, I have detailed Cadwallader's theoretical framework for teaching on disability, which incorporates insights of Merleau-Ponty and Alcoff as a way to think about the potential of ableism and disablism to impact perceptual practices. I will proceed by critiquing Cadwallader's classroom approach to teaching disability. I identify three interconnected problems. I end by providing suggestions for development of classroom activities that would incorporate Cadwallader's insights without these pitfalls.

Discussion and Critique of Cadwallader's Classroom Practice

Cadwallader reads a scripted monologue of thoughts one might have when encountering a person with a visually identifiable disability to her class in order to invite students to share or recall their own experiences of discomfort resulting from their reactions to "the simple presence of a body they recognized as different."²¹ The following is an excerpt of Cadwallader's description of encountering a person with a disability:

I'm sure that this has happened: you're walking down the street, or in the supermarket, or at the library, or something, and you encounter someone with a visible disability. You might even double-take. And suddenly, you're conscious of your own body. You're suddenly thinking, Now, now, don't stare. Don't react; it's just another body. Okay. But do I usually stare at people walking past? How long do I look at them for? Am I looking for too long a time? Too short?²²

Cadwallader assumes that students are uncomfortable encountering people with disabilities and that such encounters raise their level of bodily awareness. From this, I infer that she thinks students' expectations of normalcy are disrupted by encounters with people with visibly identifiable disabilities. She claims that this activity helps students to reconsider the classification of this expectation and their embodied reactions to the disruption of this expectation (including staring, trying not to stare, and general uncertainty regarding their bodily comportment) as natural. Through analysis of such experiences of past encounters with people with disabilities, Cadwallader suggests that students change their habitual ways of responding to people with disabilities. While I think reflections are valuable for making habitual perceptual practices explicit, I would suggest that may be a condition for the possibility of changing (dis)abl(e)ist perceptual practices rather than a resedimentation of these practices. In what follows, I will highlight three interconnected problems I identify in Cadwallader's classroom approach to teaching about disability.

First, Cadwallader does not seem to adequately respond to the difficulty of changing sedimented ways of being in the world. Though she claims that it is "almost impossible" to change how one perceives, she maintains that her students do change how they perceive people with disabilities after analyzing their previous interactions with people with disabilities.²³ She claims this in spite of her acknowledgement that students struggle "to achieve the new perceptual techniques they had been comfortable with at the end of last week's class."²⁴ She does not make clear what new perceptual techniques her students learn or how she goes about teaching these techniques. Cadwallader goes on to suggest that her students' return to a context in which ableism is taken to be common sense leads their former ways of perceiving to be re-sedimented. If this is the case, there seems little reason to expect that Cadwallader's students will adopt non-ableist ways of perceiving people with disabilities after they complete the class' unit on disability. However, I do not think this implies that facilitating student reflection on perceptual practices is without value. Rather, I think it corresponds to the difficulty of changing sedimented ways of being in the world. It is unrealistic to expect students to change habits that have been formed over the course of years within a couple of class meetings.

The preceding issue is closely connected with the second problem with Cadwallader's classroom approach. She does not seem to provide students with compelling reasons to change their perceptual practices in regard to disabled people. Since sedimented habits are the result of repetitious activities over time, it seems that changes in perceptual practices would require a process that involves student commitment to challenge their perceptions of people with disabilities on an ongoing basis. It is unclear how the activity she describes is sufficient to motivate students to undertake the task of changing their perceptual practices in a long-term, meaningful way.

The issue of motivation can be addressed by attending to the third problem inherent in Cadwallader's approach: she does not address the experiences of disabled people. Since Cadwallader is discussing interactions between people with and without disabilities, I think she needs to consider both constructs that shape the lived experiences of people with disabilities as well as her able-bodied students. She briefly mentions that some students have disabilities themselves without developing how they are affected by her classroom activities dealing with encountering "disabled others." She states:

It can also be troubling for students with disabilities ('visible' or 'invisible'), who, even if they are differently positioned in relation to the institutionalized notions of normalcy and ability, nonetheless participate to varying degrees in the same incantatory context which constitutes their own bodily being as a problem.²⁵

Apart from this brief observation, Cadwallader does not consider the experiences of people with disabilities in her pedagogical approach. The reader is left to wonder how these students and other people with disabilities experience being situated within a context that constitutes each of them as a problem in virtue of their bodily being. It is important to recognize that students with impairments may accept ableism and disablism as common sense just as able-bodied students may. Disabled people are not immune to these dominant cultural narratives. In spite of Cadwallader's explicit commitment to challenging ableism, it seems that in the classroom activity she describes, the experiences of people with disabilities seem to be an afterthought.

Cadwallader's method for facilitating classroom discussion regarding disability only focuses on the discomfort mainly able-bodied students may feel when encountering people with visibly identifiable disabilities and ways to change their own thinking. There is no discussion of the perspectives of people with disabilities regarding their experiences of *noticeable responses* to their disabilities. In the case of visibly identifiable disabilities, the ways that people respond to one's body have an impact on one's perception of oneself. Understanding the ways in which the actions of other people shape the experiences of people with disabilities may provide motivation for students to put in the effort it would take to change their ways of thinking about and interacting with people with disabilities.

Suggestions for Pedagogy on Disability

In this section, I provide suggestions for facilitating student reflection on perceptual practices and disability. While providing a comprehensive treatment of this topic is beyond the

scope of this paper, I do give some guidelines for thinking about appropriate and effective approaches to teaching on disability.²⁶ I advocate classroom activities that examine the ways that the media portray disabled people since these narratives about disability may also inform perceptions of disabled people in everyday life. I also discuss ways that educators can include experiences of disabled people in order to help students to understand how ableism and disablism are harmful.

Thinking about disability through Merleau-Ponty's notion of being-in-the-world can clarify how socio-historical context affects understandings and experiences of disability. I would suggest having students read excerpts of his *Phenomenology of Perception* as well Alcoff's *Visible Identities* on the formation of perceptual practices in order to give them a conceptual framework for thinking about their own perceptions of disabled people.²⁷ If the goal is to help students understand how disablism "dominant perceptions of disability as lack, as broken, as tragedy, as incapacity, as failure, as pitiful, as not entirely human, as proximate to death" have come to be treated as common sense, it is important to consider ways that these perceptions are disseminated and reinforced.²⁸ While there are many ways to accomplish this task, I focus on the media due to their integral role in conveying disablism views of disability. Examining media portrayals of fictional and actual people with disabilities can be helpful for thinking about dominant narratives about disabled people. Jack Nelson notes that the American media often rely on negative stereotypes when depicting people with disabilities. He states, "Such negative depictions burn deep into viewers' and readers' vision of the world and dictate their reaction to those with disabilities whom they encounter."²⁹ Viewing and engaging in class discussion of video clips portraying disabled people can be very effective for helping students see how disablism can inform how we are expected to perceive disabled people. For example, I contrast a clip of an episode of the television show *Glee*³⁰ with the trailer for the movie *Murderball*.³¹ *Glee* relies on familiar disablism tropes while *Murderball* seeks to disrupt them, and the contrast between these approaches to portraying people with quadriplegia makes clear that different perceptual practices are supported by these portrayals. My point is not to claim that the way *Murderball* depicts disabled men is unproblematic; rather, I think this film conveys that disablism need not shape perceptions of people with disabilities.

There are a large number of factors that affect any given person's experience of disability including, but not limited to the type, onset, and extent of impairment, economic status, accessibility of the built environment, access to transportation and healthcare, race, gender, and level of social support. Cultural narratives and responses of other people also shape experiences of disability. Thus, it is important to emphasize that no individual can be an epistemological representative for all disabled people. While students with disabilities may be willing to volunteer to discuss their experiences, teachers should never demand that they do so or ask them to represent people with disabilities. Students could be shown videos of people with disabilities sharing their experiences or

read written accounts in order to gain a better understanding of diverse experiences of disability. I will discuss two video clips that have been useful for prompting discussion of perceptual practices of disability in my classroom.

A video clip from the documentary *The Examined Life* in which Judith Butler and Sunaura Taylor have a conversation centered on disability has proven very useful for helping my students understand one woman's everyday experiences of disability in public spaces.³² Her use of a motorized wheelchair makes Taylor's impairment visibly identifiable. She talks about her experiences of living with a disability, including people's reactions to her non-normative ways of functioning. She also discusses becoming aware of disability as a political issue. This video clip is useful for helping students to understand the ways that other people's reactions can be an obstacle for Taylor being able to do ordinary things such as getting coffee from a café. I emphasized that disabled people may accept disablism as common sense just as easily as able-bodied people. Thus, becoming aware of and examining the ways that disablism may affect perception regarding disability is a process from which disabled people as well as able-bodied people may benefit.

Multidisciplinary artist and dancer Bill Shannon discusses his experiences of interacting with people in public spaces. He notes that his disability status is ambiguous and claims that this puts him "in a situation of constantly having to ignore or avoid people in public to just get through my day without having to explain myself repeatedly."³³ The assumption that there is a clear line between being categorized as able-bodied or disabled underlies the difficulty those encountering Shannon have with the ambiguity of his status. Shannon's discussion makes clear that ability and disability are more of a continuum than a binary relation. This recognition may help students to give up feeling the "need" to categorize neatly people in this way. Shannon shares the vocabulary he has developed to describe the ways that people tend to respond to him in public spaces. Shannon uses the bodily medium of performance art in order to disrupt common understandings of and embodied responses to people with disabilities. This type of engagement with people with disabilities can help them develop strategies for challenging (dis)abl(e)ism rather than internalizing it. Shannon's talk makes clear how he is affected by people's reactions to his impairment and can provide motivation for students to carefully consider their perceptual practices in regard to people with disabilities.

Conclusion

While I find many aspects of Cadwallader's theoretical framework useful for understanding how ableism and disablism can inform perception, I have argued that her teaching practice is not consistent with her insights regarding sedimentation of perceptual practices. Within Merleau-Ponty's framework, habits are sedimented through repetition. This repetition cannot be achieved within a

couple of class periods. Students are likely to enter the classroom lacking the insight that they are even engaging in perceptual practices informed by cultural narratives rather than simply perceiving people with impairments *as they are*. Thus, I think it is important to provide students with conceptual frameworks that allow them to reflect upon ways that cultural narratives about disability may shape their perceptual practices.

I advocate approaches to challenging ableist and disablist perceptual practices that thematize perceptual practices and take into consideration the experiences of people with disabilities. Showing and discussing video clips is one approach that can be effective for both *desiderata*. I find Cadwallader's approach to teaching on disability problematic insofar as she only focuses on the perspectives of able-bodied students when discussing encounters with people with visibly noticeable disabilities. Understanding the ways that people with disabilities *experience* is constructed as a problem through ableist and disablist perceptual practices helps students to recognize their own potential to affect disabled people in positive and negative ways. This could provide the motivation for students to work to re-sediment their perceptual practices that seem to be missing in the classroom activities described by Cadwallader. Teaching students to see how ableism and disablism may inform perceptual practices is important because they have the power to change what beliefs are treated as common sense, which, in turn, can improve perceptual and other practices regarding people with disabilities.

Notes

¹ The following papers also explore ways to explicitly center embodiment in the classroom: Natalie Helberg, Cressida Heyes, and Jaclyn Rohel, "Thinking through the Body: Yoga, Philosophy, and Physical Education" in *Teaching Philosophy* 32 (Sept 2009): 263-284; Richard Schusterman, "Teaching Philosophy: A Somaesthetic Approach," *Teaching Philosophy*, edited by Andrea Kenkmann and Contributors (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009) 57-68; Michael Peters. "Education and the Philosophy of the Body: Bodies of Knowledge and Knowledges of the Body" in *Knowing Bodies, Moving Minds*, edited by Liora Bresler (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers: 2004) 13-27

² I would argue that a shift in perceptual practices regarding disability was essential for passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. A revised version of this act states, "in enacting the ADA, Congress recognized that physical and mental disabilities in no way diminish a person's right to fully participate in all aspects of society, but that people with physical or mental disabilities are frequently precluded from doing so because of prejudice, antiquated attitudes, or the failure to remove societal and institutional barriers." See the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, title 42, Chapter 126, section 12101, revised January 2009. <http://www.ada.gov/pubs/adastatute08.htm#12101b>

³ Miwo Iwakuma considers the usefulness of Merleau-Ponty for disability theory in "The Body as Embodiment: An Investigation of Merleau-Ponty" in *Disability/Postmodernism: Embodying Disability Theory*, edited by Mairian Corker and Tom Shakespeare (New York: Continuum, 2002). Kevin Paterson and Bill Hughes suggest that phenomenology is a productive method for theorizing experiences of disability. They briefly reference Merleau-Ponty. See Kevin Paterson and Bill Hughes, "The Social Model of Disability and the Disappearing Body: Towards a Sociology of Impairment," *Disability & Society* 12.3 (1997): 325-340, and Paterson and Hughes, "Disability Studies and Phenomenology: The Carnal Politics of Everyday Life," *Disability & Society* 14.5 (1999): 597-610.

⁴ Jessica Cadwallader, "Stirring Up the Sediment: The Corporeal Pedagogies of Disability," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 15.4 (October 2010): 514.

⁵ Of course, I am only able to comment on the aspects of Cadwallader's teaching found in her article. Perhaps she addresses the issues I identify in her pedagogical practice but simply does not discuss them in her article.

⁶ Cadwallader, "Stirring Up the Sediment," 518.

⁷ Veronica Chouinard, "Making Space for Disabling Difference: Challenging Ableist Geographies," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 15 (1997): 380.

⁸ Campbell also advocates making this distinction. See Fiona Campbell, *Contours of Ableism: The Production of Disability and Aabledness* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009) 4.

⁹ Cadwallader, “Stirring Up the Sediment,” 518.

¹⁰ Cadwallader hyphenates “being-in-the-world.” This phrase is not hyphenated in Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans Donald Landes (New York: Routledge, 2012). I follow the convention adopted in this text.

¹¹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 81, 137.

¹² Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 131.

¹³ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 131.

¹⁴ Cadwallader, “Stirring Up the Sediment,” 514.

¹⁵ See Sascha Hein, Mandy Grumm, and Michael Fingerle, “Is Contact with People with Disabilities a Guarantee for Positive Implicit and Explicit Attitudes?” *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 26.4 (February 2011): 509-522.

¹⁶ Linda Martín Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 194.

¹⁷ Alcoff, *Visible Identities*, 188.

¹⁸ Cadwallader, “Stirring Up the Sediment,” 518.

¹⁹ Cadwallader, “Stirring Up the Sediment,” 518.

²⁰ Alcoff, *Visible Identities*, 188.

²¹ Cadwallader, “Stirring Up the Sediment,” 522. I find the phrasing “simple presence of a body” to be troubling here, since it is clear that, within Merleau-Ponty’s framework of perception adopted by Cadwallader, there is no possibility of an unmediated perception of a body. Perhaps Cadwallader intends to address students’ *experiences* of perceptions of people with disabilities as unmediated.

²² Cadwallader, “Stirring Up the Sediment,” 519.

²³ Cadwallader, “Stirring Up the Sediment,” 519.

²⁴ Cadwallader, “Stirring Up the Sediment,” 523.

²⁵ Cadwallader, “Stirring Up the Sediment,” 518.

²⁶ Disability simulations are a popular and problematic approach to disability awareness. First, they tend to only provide students with a distant approximation of one aspect of the experience of a person with a newly acquired impairment. Second, students do not learn about the actual experiences of impairment; instead they are likely to rely on understandings of disability that are informed by ableism and disablism in order to imagine these experiences. As feminist disability theorist Alison Kafer states, “Although these kinds of exercises are intended to reduce fears and misperceptions about disabled people, the voices and experiences of disabled people are absent.” See Kafer’s *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013) 5. For a more

extensive analysis of disability simulation see Sheryl Burgstahler and Tanis Doe, “Disability-related Simulations: If, When, and How to Use Them,” *Review of Disability Studies* 1.2 (2004): 4-17.

²⁷ I assigned Chapter 7 “The Phenomenology of Racial Perception” and Chapter 8 “Racism and Visible Race” in Alcoff’s *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self*. I think that even having students read and discuss brief excerpts of these chapters would be useful for comprehension of how perceptual practices can be informed by stereotypes about races and disabilities.

²⁸ Cadwallader, “Stirring Up the Sediment,” 518.

²⁹ Jack Nelson, *The Disabled, The Media, and the Information Age* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994) 3. I highly recommend this text as a resource on portrayals of people with disabilities in the media.

³⁰ Alfonso Gomez-Rejon, dir., *Glee* “Laryngitis” (Season 1, Episode 18), Fox Network, 2010.

³¹ Henry Rubin and Dana Shapiro, dirs. *Murderball*, ThinkFilm and Participant Media, 2005. DVD.

³² Astra Taylor, dir., *The Examined Life: Philosophy is in the Streets*, Sphinx Productions and the National Film Board of Canada, 2008, DVD.

³³ Bill Shannon, perf., *Dancing with Crutches*, Pop!Tech. 2007.

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