Reimagining Disability: The Crippling Sense of Idiom

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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This paper uses the conceptual framework set up by John Sallis in his work *Force of Imagination: The Sense of the Elemental* to address how people understand our relationship to the natural world and extends that framework to disability as a concept in order to resolve existing tensions in disability discourse. The paper argues that Sallis's understanding of sense, imagination, and the elemental allows us to recognize that disability is not something that can be quantified by compiling traits or categorizing experiences. Sallis's understanding of nature shows us gaps in our ability to engage disability as something non rigid. I argue that disability is best understood idiomatically, as something not reducible to its parts or concrete definitions that nonetheless carries meaning. The way Sallis articulates sense demonstrates that existing disability models are insufficient to account for particular experiences. Better understanding imagination allows us to engage in new modes of discussion that are more encompassing and less exclusive than prior understandings of disability. An understanding of the elemental demonstrates a necessary reckoning that disability scholarship must make between the natural world and discussing disability as a category.

Disclaimer: The words "cripple and crippling" are slurs that have been historically used to justify violence against the disabled community. In this work, the word cripple is being used as an act of reclamation by an individual with a mobility impairment. Non physically disabled individuals should substitute the use of this word for the word "disabling" or "debilitating."

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ICXC NIKA

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my sister Markella and to all the young disabled people who will go on to do great things in this world.

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I. Introduction

I remember waking up one morning and thinking something was wrong. It must have been early 2020 when I found myself floating oddly outside my body. For a moment, I thought I might be paralyzed or still dreaming. I wiggled a finger and felt the sensation of my blanket; the sound of birds outside and the light from the window told me my vision and hearing were intact. Still, something was missing. I remember laying there for what was probably a full thirty seconds before I figured out what was happening to me. I was, for the first time in years, without pain. The feeling was strange, incredibly alien. I felt as though I had lost contact with my body and at the same time I knew this moment was an odd privilege. I didn't want to break whatever spell had come over me so I tried to stay as still as possible. I only managed to hold my stillness for two ish minutes before I once again moved my finger and pain flooded back in. My heartbeat was once again felt in my joints and the blood pumped into my muscles made them ache like usual. I remember asking myself, in that moment that I sat up and my back creaked, if I would ever experience painlessness again. Although the brief respite from pain wasn't unenjoyable, it brought to my attention the way in which my attunement to my own body is now fully enveloped in pain. My sense of my arms, legs, torso, and even internal organs is constituted by the pain I feel in them. Without that pain, even if only for a few minutes, I did not feel real to myself. I found, and continue to find, that my sense of myself is deeply rooted in an experience that I did not choose and that most people spend their entire life trying to avoid or mitigate. In some ways I was warned that this would be the case. I was told the pain would redefine me. What I did not understand was that in many ways, pain is just another sensation. Like vision or hearing, pain is now just part of how I experience the world. Though the sun is often too bright for human eyes to handle, we have adapted to use sunglasses, hats, and shade to shield our eyes from sensations

that would harm them. I wish that rather than disability and pain being framed as some horror I was about to undergo, someone had told me I just have to learn how to adapt to, how to accommodate, the way I sense the world. Even more so, I wish someone had been able to explain the way in which a unique sensory relationship to the world would open so many possibilities that others can not see. There are three truths to being disabled in the way that I am; the first is that pain will always be a central part of my experience. The second is, all things considered, I am grateful to be forced to experience the world so extremely, with a sense of reality and of myself most are not privileged to have. The third truth, and the one that frustrates me most about being disabled, is the lack of a language or framework that exists to make the first two truths understandable to others. The isolation of the experience of physical pain is exasperated by the fact that there exists no adequate way to share my reality with others outside of the pre-existing frameworks for discussing disability. My problems with these frameworks will be explored more fully in the following paper, but fundamentally all existing frameworks for disability have been overwhelmingly developed by people who are not disabled and have come out of a history that seeks to actively exclude particular experiences from the narrative. Additionally, misconceptions about the way that humans are situated within nature make existing disability discourse complicated. Even those who claim that disability is a natural part of life fail to recover a relation to the natural world that is not based on rigid, compositional, definitions.

This thesis will develop a new discussion of disability that allows us to account for a wide range of experiences that are often excluded from discourse. Rather than addressing the natural world and disability as something that is composed of individual parts, I want to engage disability from a perspective of appearance or manifestness. I argue that we need to stop treating disability as a set of fixed properties or qualities possessed by an individual body or by any

particular space or social norm that impacts bodies. Rather I will seriously interrogate the self showing of disability where it appears in the world. I will use John Sallis's work *Force of Imagination: The Sense of the Elemental* to show how Sallis's understanding of sense, imagination, and the elemental can offer a new account of disability. This new account, in following Sallis's desire to avoid subordinating the sensible to the intelligible, will allow for disability to show itself in a way that both resolves tensions in existing disability models and opens disability discourse to new possibilities. Ultimately, I claim that disability is best understood idiomatically. By this I mean that idiom as a mode of language subverts normative definitional uses that are derived from compositional components and instead allows for the generation of a language that is a unique singular expression of an experience. Because idioms are not uses of language that derive their meaning from a mere composition of definitional parts, it is the language best used to engage disability in a way that does not reduce disability and nature to a question of composition. Instead, understanding disability as an idiom can allow us to fully engage the experiences of disability as they are experienced both by those who are disabled and by the society they live in. In this sense, idiom can bridge a gap of understanding that exists in disability discourse between those who live disabled lives and those who do not. Experiences of disability as something that is both natural and positive while still requiring accommodation and aid is hard to give an account of but I believe idiom is the language that will allow us to do so. The experiences of the world that are constituted by disability currently lack an adequate language to be discussed outside of frameworks that reduce them to symptoms or limitation. The status quo of addressing nature and our bodies in terms of composition falls short of allowing us to see disability in a broader lens as something that holds unique and positive insights precisely because of the way it disables.

Sallis begins his book with “Imagine being there.” This phrase is often used when abled people reference disabled existence. It is used to evoke sympathy to hopefully make it easier for non disabled people to accommodate disabled people’s needs. What I have found is that very few actually have any sense of what they mean when they say “imagine being disabled.” Mostly, people just imagine pain, suffering, and limitations. They imagine a life permanently altered and the loss of a life they desire. Beyond that, most people don't really have a good sense of what disability is, how it works, and how it opens possibility as much as it closes it. Even less so do people have the capacity to imagine the physical sensations or sense perception that disabled people live with. Sallis gives us a framework for not only understanding sense perception and the way we interpret and understand those sensations, but also a new way to think about imagination in relation to the natural world. Sallis identifies that we are living lives divorced from nature and that our language has enclosed us in ways of thinking that subordinate our physical sensations and lived experiences to terms that are intelligible to the rational mind and already codified. Because our bodies are of nature and are also the locus of our sense perception, resolving the problem of our relationship to nature and sense can allow us to imagine new modes of discussing our bodies. In doing so we can free disability discourse from the entrapment of established language that divorces us from our lived experiences and the world around us. My aim in this work is not to create some magic solution to the problems facing disabled people. Instead I will use Sallis to develop a new mode of approaching disability that can open possibilities for explaining disability experiences. I posit that the state of disability discourse as it sits now is fighting an uphill battle against language that makes the discourse impossible. Thus a new relation to the way we speak on disability is necessary before solutions can be discovered. My project will consist of some necessary background and three main sections. First, I will provide

some background on the history of disability and disability discourse; then, I will move into my sections on Sallis. I will introduce Sallis's understanding of sense in relation to language and show how this relationship is a central problem for disability discourse. Next I will show how existing misconceptions of our relation to the natural world implicate our bodies as extensions of that natural world. Without resolving the way we view nature, we cannot hope to free disability discourse from a problematic history that has always framed nature as something to extract from. Our failure to understand nature as something that is both dynamic and manifest, not merely composed of parts to be used, has direct implications on the way we view bodies and disability as a whole. Finally I will engage Sallis's modes of imagination to show how we can reimagine our relationship to nature and disability. Resolving our problem of language will require a firm understanding of how imagination functions in relation to the manifestness of the natural world. As a core component of how nature and our bodies come to be manifest, imagination will be a key part generating a new language, one that is idiomatic, that can account not merely for compositional parts of disability but the way it shows itself out of the natural world.

A History of Disability Discourse

One of the recurring problems within disability scholarship begins at the point of definition. Historically many of the conditions that today we call disabilities would have been referred to only as individual conditions. There were the blind, the sick, the lame, the enfeebled, etc. These conditions were singled out because of the way that they made life hard to live. It is difficult to be alert to danger if one can not hear, it is impossible to procure food for oneself if one can not walk. Nature poses a threat to those who can not defend themselves against it. As a whole category, disability did not exist. For example, in 1050 the language used to discern

people with disabilities in legislation and medical texts was not a collective group of individuals. Instead disabilities were only identified by symptom or syndrome. Lame, cripple, lepper, mute, dumb, mad[1] were all medical terms used to identify particular conditions of the body or mind as well as labels applied to individuals in the social sphere. But as questions of collective action became more pressing and social models of identity began to take prominence, the term disability arose. Disability scholar Elizabeth Barnes asks in her work *The Minority Body* if it makes sense to address disability as a whole category or only individual disabilities. Her work discusses what would be necessary to define disabilities as a unifying group and does not provide a concise definition so much as a framework for understanding the relationship between individual conditions. Nonetheless, Barnes argues that it is important to give a philosophical account of disability as a whole rather than just individual conditions. The book *Crip Theory* by Robert McRurer outlines disability as a form of cultural queerness that is socially constructed and maintained. The United Nations defines disability as "any restriction or lack (resulting from impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner within the range considered normal for a human being" (UN 1983:I.c. 6-7). The Americans with Disabilities Act defines a person with disability as an individual who "Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, or has a history or record of impairment (such as cancer in remission), or is *regarded* as having such an impairment by others even if the individual does not actually have a disability (such as a person who has scars from a severe burn that does not limit any major life activity)" (ADA National Network). All of these definitions and understandings of disability are aimed at providing different ways to view disability as a

[1] Many of these terms are now considered slurs and should only be used for acts of historical explanation or strategic reclamation by people who experience acute harm from their use.

category. Barnes and McRurer are focused on emphasizing the social and relational elements of disability, whereas legal definitions found in the UN and ADA emphasize physical impairment due to legal necessity. Because of this difference in emphasis, there are widely considered to be two competing models of disability that dominate almost all discourse or at least leave their print strongly in every uttering of disability. These two models of disability are the medical model and the social model of disability.

The medical model of disability is likely today the most prevalent understanding of the category of disability. This model is both the foundation for medical practices related to disability, and it is the basis of most legal language surrounding disability. This model holds a very scientific understanding of the world that understands questions about the body to be in relation to some ideal or complete body. Under the medical model the ability of bodies and their distinct features are evaluated against an idealized norm. Failure to meet that norm results in the determination of a disability. Because of this it is easy to categorize blindness, lack of walking ability, deafness etc as disabilities. This model locates the primary problems that arise from disability at the site of the physical body and seeks to resolve these problems by addressing the body directly to allow the body to better survive in the world. Technologies to improve vision, reintroduce hearing, and allow people to walk are the common solutions discussed among those who approach disability concerns from a medical model background. Here, the discourse is often phrased as a "what is wrong? What can we do to fix it" sort of question. In many ways this model has certainly been life saving, without it people with diabetes would not be able to live relatively normal lives and individuals with vision impairment would not have the option to standardize their vision with glasses. Prosthetic limbs and physical therapy regiments to help individuals regain mobility were driven by this model. At the same time, this model posits that

some bodies are inherently wrong and need fixing. This obviously poses problems for disabled people who find themselves happy in their own bodies and content with their ways of life. Many of the most prominent discourses that have challenged the medical model have focused on the way this model tends to strip agency and choice from disabled people, especially children, who are not given full capacity to consent to these "corrections."

The second dominant model of disability that dominates much of the discourse generated by disabled people is the social model of disability. This model is often considered to stand in direct opposition from the medical model. The social model of disability claims that focusing on the body is counter productive to developing frames of social and public life that accommodates disability. Moreover, they tend to claim that framing individual bodies rather than social systems as the locus of inequity pushes responsibility onto individuals to "fix" themselves. Instead, the social model argues that as a society we need to become more adept at handling bodily differences and accommodating different human needs. Questions that arise from the social model tend to ask "how can we alter this system to make it more inclusive?" and "what about existing systems is exclusive?" This model also tends to emphasize the capacities of disabled people as well as our unique perspectives. The social model is often considered responsible for the civil rights push that demanded increased accessibility across the United States. The social model has also allowed disabled people to regain agency in discussions about our bodies and lives. On the other hand, the social model alone can not account for instances where individual bodily differences prove fatal. Medical intervention will always be necessary and refusing to allow disabled people the option to alter themselves for their medical wellbeing would be obviously problematic. In a world that does not or can not accommodate individuals, the question of what individuals ought to do with their own bodies in order to live easier lives

becomes incredibly precarious. One of the dominant fights between the social and medical model emerges within the Deaf community in relation to cochlear implants. Some claim that the ability to hear is not necessary to living a fulfilling life due to the culture and community built by deaf people. Others feel that the ability to have access to more of the normative world outweighs any potential loss of Deaf culture that may come along with it. These concerns have no easy answers, these tensions cannot be unilaterally resolved.

Legal models of disability tend to use the language of the medical model to describe what qualifies as a "disabled person" but rely on social models to determine what counts as discrimination or injustice. The UN's distinctions for disability rights includes considerations of physical handicaps as well as intersection between bodily norm and social function. The ADA in the US on the other hand has a more open interpretation of what counts as a bodily difference and this has allowed pregnant people to leverage its language to achieve more rights. In other instances however the ADA has failed to protect those with non visible or chronic conditions from injustice due to its lack of clarity. Defining and/or understanding the term disability is thus not a theoretical problem but one that has serious material impacts. Scholars struggle not only to acknowledge benefits from both dominant models of disability while also trying to avoid causing political harm by undermining critical legislation. Because people's actual lives, their direct ability to breathe, eat, and live is tied up legally in these two models and their language, it becomes almost impossible to escape them. Our personal struggles for survival are clouded by the constant inability to give an account of our needs and wants in a way that is intelligible to those operating with complex and varied understandings of what disability is. Generally scholarship takes disabled people to be an oppressed or underprivileged class, but do we really know how or why? Do we really have a grip on how we might alter those circumstances? Are we

capable of imagining beautiful flourishing futures for the disabled? If the answer is no, it is in large part because of how much confusion there is about the term and phenomenon of disability itself. So how are we to clarify our understanding of disability? How are we to recover a sense of imagination that can open something new?

First we face the problem of language. Speech, and language, remain essential to any discourse. “One is never simply caught in language but can always turn language against itself, either within a so-called language or in the space between such languages” (133). There are always gaps for play, but in many ways language locks us into preconceived notions and limits imagination. This is for two reasons; the first is that self-showing is not prelinguistic. “It cannot be determined as a prelinguistic realm in which things would simply be given or perceived and upon which speech would only subsequently and thus inconsequentially come to bear” (132). Appearance and sense of understanding rely on and exist alongside language. “On the other hand things can no doubt show themselves without speech actually coming into play to determine them” (133). The historical reclamation of slurs within marginalized communities is one example of the power of this truth. Disabled people regularly call for a crippling of whatever systems we are engaged in. Crippling in the positive sense- the recognition that brokenness is often a positive, and that alterations that seem (and often are) devastating are frequently incredible spaces for creation and possibility. I am a Cripple, and if systems are to accommodate my presence within them they too must be crippled or open to the acts of crippling that I embody. How that is to be done is a separate question, but positing that it should be done, even as a mere linguistic inversion, opens space for new understandings of what crippling is.

What I, and I suspect many other disabled people mean, when we call for the crippling of a system or mode of thought is not a mere platitude, not a mere taking of a negative word and

imbuing it with positive association. When I call for the crippling of a discourse, the crippling of a system, I mean it needs to be disabled. It needs to stop working–be interrupted from its goals and abilities–so it can break down and crack open long enough for something about its nature to be shown. In and through crippling, the relationship between means and ends can be evaluated without the obfuscation of the relationship through subordination to the end in mind and the demand for means. Disabled people have developed modes of survival, insights into the way that systems function, and knowledge about how to thrive and grow which we struggle to communicate and share with others because it is knowledge derived out of a set of experiences that cannot be accounted for. The kind of capacity I have for spotting others in pain cannot be articulated to someone not in pain because the pain itself is nearly impossible to articulate. It is hard to explain the way that possibility opens as it closes without a clear means of sharing. As my legs stop being used for walking, my hand, through the joystick of my wheelchair, becomes a foot that can sense and feel the texture of the ground. Without being able to account for the disabled experience and existence, not only do disabled people struggle to advocate for our needs, but our unique outlook and insight into the world remains lost to others. Nonetheless, it remains possible for what is sensible about systems to show itself when sense is not subordinated to the rationality of the system. Interruption, often uncomfortable and inconvenient interruption, is essential to the showing of that which has been concealed by the way humans take for granted anything they are familiar with and which pushes what is sensible to the background as soon as we come to rationalize things around us. Gloria Anzaldua's concept of nepantla relies on this destruction and opening between; Dewy discusses the need for breaking and transformation in the creation of art. Likewise many philosophers emphasize the need for interruption to open new problems, and new possibilities. But the notion of disability, of crippling, remains negatively

charged despite being the lived experience of fully embracing such moments of interruption. Of living in what is revealed when interruption is taking place, and of being in the between and in the almost. History and philosophy have missed the Crippled as a unique site for interruption by assuming that to be crippled is only to be dis-abled. In viewing disability this way one ignores what is opened up, what is en-abled or even just shown to be possible, by the positionality of being crippled. It is not that the potentiality of cripples has been merely dismissed or ignored. In many ways, our sensory experience has not even been understood. Disability is not being witnessed, encountered, or accounted for on its own terms because systems that come in contact with it refuse to allow themselves to be crippled alongside the cripple. Humans are fully capable of echolocation; a handful of blind people have worked very hard to develop the skill. But how that skill would be shared, or the insights they may gain about the very composition of the world, are lost to others because the skill they build is seen as a poor alternative to sight rather than an insight with its own merits. No one acknowledges that wheelchair users often develop exceptional spatial awareness, or that we become at home mechanics for our assistive devices. These skills and insights are seen only as sad necessities. My capacity to read my body, to know I will be sick two weeks in advance based on the texture of my palm, is knowledge that helps me live my life but not knowledge I could easily teach another. We find ourselves then in need of a new kind of language in relation to disability. This language will need to account for bodies as natural things that are situated within frames of social and linguistic norms. It will be a language and a mode of engagement that understands disability as arising out of circumstances while also generating circumstances. To begin to develop this language and engagement, I turn to Sallis's account of sensory experience and sense as understanding.

II. Sense and the Need for Idiom

Sensory experience, sense perception, and how we quantify sensible experience into language poses a massive concern for disability discourse. In order to move toward a more inclusive language of disability, we will need to be clear about what sense is and how it operates. Because disability is in large part categorized through its sensory difference, and because the experience of disability is one that can be so extreme, common understandings of what is sensible and what can be experienced through sense perception are insufficient. I posit that we fundamentally misunderstand how sense operates and that sense is often overcoded by linguistic norms that foreclose possibility for the sake of universal intelligibility. Sallis's work supports this claim and shows us the path toward a new language for sense.

Force of Imagination begins properly with the question of sense. Sallis has two different senses of sense that he wants the reader to understand as distinct but entangled. The first kind of sense is that of sense perception. This sense is essentially our senses, it is our sight, our hearing, our tactical sensations of the world. The second kind of sense is our understanding of the world, our comprehension of the things we experience through sense perception, our capacity to organize and make sense of information. Sense (sense perception) and sense (understanding) are related because they play off of one another. Sense perception has to be understood for it to mean anything, for it to make any sense, but understanding of anything is already situated within our experience of reality that is determined by our sense perception. It is for this reason that Sallis says that sense complicates the most simple of philosophical beginnings. Every experience is already being determined by our sense perception but our understanding of that experience can

not be pure, it must be interpreted through our sense perception. Every beginning of any philosophical evaluation is not the beginning of the experience but only a secondary making sense of the experience in a way that is understandable. Thus, sense as sense perception is a release into the beginning of experience. At the same time sense as understanding takes us immediately out of the beginning into something else. Simply beginning anything, any discourse or any philosophical inquiry, is therefore complicated by an anteriority. We experience things outside ourselves, those things must be understood, sense has to come to sense, and so any inquiry is an interplay between an internal sense and an external sense. Language is not ours alone the way our physical sensations are, but our physical sensations are only understood through language. In explaining my strange experience of painlessness I can only give an account of how I came to understand my physical sensations, I can not account individually for the physical sense or the understanding that came after.[2] Both are tied into one another in a way that can not be separated. The external world freely arrived to me and I was left to make sense of it, it is not something I can insist upon, something has to exist outside me first to experience (Sallis 30). Thus experience is always situated in a world that already exists. This world that exists can not be a world that is itself isolated into hollow parts without signification. Sense perception gives way to signification, through sense as understanding, which has itself already given itself to sense perception. It is for this reason that Sallis begins with sense and it is also for this reason that understanding physical experience is so difficult. On the one hand sense perception gives itself to us. On the other hand understanding through language has already given itself, attached itself, to sense perception so that it can allow us to actually understand such sense perception. This dual understanding of sense begins to account for the problem I have

[2] How would I describe the sensation of a lack of sensation (pain) to someone who has never experienced the sensation of pain the way I have? How do I describe as a sensation the default experience for most people?

faced since becoming disabled. My struggle to describe my sensations to people who can not imagine them, the struggle for adequate language to explain the interplay between my physical senses and my understanding of the anteriority tied into them, my isolation, can all be taken as problems connected to our misconceptions of sense that Sallis allows us to escape.

I spend my time in doctors offices learning languages to explain to people that I am in so much pain I cannot physically stand but that my day, my life, is actually going pretty well and I am overall happy. The physical sensation and the understanding through language of that sensation are not aligned with the way that sense (perception) is usually sensible (understandable.) In order for my experience to be understandable, to both myself and others, I need to be able to work with both these notions of sense and to be able to understand the relationship between them. Any account of my lived reality will need to account not only for my physical sense perception that is uniquely situated by pain, but also for the ways that the existing attempts to make sense of that experience fall short of adequately containing the experience I seek to show others. How can disability be accounted for in a way that apprehends and accounts for what I experience under its category? In answering this question I will return to Sallis's account of historical ways of understanding apprehension and perception. There we will see clear flaws in the way these historical understandings limit conceptions of disability and can move further into Sallis's account of sense so that we may recover new articulations of sense.

The ancient Greeks had two different ways of understanding apprehension. One such form of apprehension was the apprehension that happens with one's body, a physical sensing such as sight or taste. The other form of apprehension to which this stood opposed was νους. This word was also used to describe apprehension of a sort, but not the physical embodied kind. νους has various translations but what remains the same among all of them is that whatever is

apprehended here is inaccessible to the bodily senses. Much like comprehending a word's meaning written in a text. Neither of these two apprehensions alone would account for how we understand elements of disability. Neither sense perception nor sense as understanding can individually account for experience but both have their correlation to existing models of disability thought.

The first form of apprehension is an embodied form of apprehension that takes place through sense perception. This is often where people look to determine or categorize disability. Our bodies are taken stock of and our capacity for apprehension of various sorts investigated. There are the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the crippled, the lame. The embodied sensory experience of disability can not simply be ignored. On the other hand, the social model of disability and disabled scholars like Robert McRurer, Elizabeth Barnes, and Christine Weiseler argue strongly that one key characteristic of disability is related to a second form of apprehension. They, and I, believe that disability gives one an additional capacity to understand certain things about the world. To sense meanings and purpose differently. I have argued in the past that wheelchair use has given me a wildly different sense of equipment in a Heideggerian sense. So how is it that one term "disability" is supposed to center both opposed forms of apprehension in its studies? On the one hand it needs to account for the embodied physical senses and on the other it ought to address the social and perceptible position of that body which we all seem to understand but can't quite put a finger on. Disability is experienced through physical sense perception, it is often perceived socially, and it is both by the individual experiencing it and by the individuals observing it apprehended and understood through language. This is precisely where the debates about what disability is and how it should be defined arise. The question becomes where should we place the emphasis? Is disability social, is it embodied, is it environmental? Is it something to

do with our physical senses or our existential ones? How is it the case that we all have a base understanding that users of wheelchairs and canes and walkers count as disabled people but glasses users move further front that category every day and those who need foot mobility aids, shoes, were never considered at all for the position? How do we preserve the importance of the distinction of disability without gatekeeping the term? How do we expand the term but avoid an explosion into insignificance that will make political struggles impossible? None of these questions can be well answered while we as scholars still work with these two notions of apprehension or are confined to the medical and social model alone to think about disability. So let's follow Sallis and see what unfolds itself for us in thinking through disability with a new notion of the dual meaning of sense.

Sallis and I want to recover a sense of sense that erodes the tension between the two Greek forms of apprehension. As I have already briefly explained at the start of this section, Sallis's understanding of sense perception and sense as understanding are deeply tangled with one another rather than being in tension. Sallis comes to this understanding of sense by positing that sense is indifferent to the difference between apprehending and apprehended. Rather than taking sense (either as perception or understanding) to be something that is possessed or gathered, Sallis wants us to understand sense in a way that does not discriminate between active and passive, between sensing and sensed. Both that which is sensed and the individual or individuals sensing are present together in the same moment and both essential elements of the encounter. This allows for sense perception and the sense as understanding to be collapsed into a singular moment, an event, an image that is the merger of these two senses of sense. Rather than an ordered process of sense perception being interpreted by sense understanding through signification, signification and physicality are given together to one another. The primary reason

this articulation of sense is important is that it frees the sensible, both sense perception and sense understanding, from the demand of interpretive intelligibility. Sallis says "by canceling the subordination of the sensible to the intelligible, this turn also abolished the character of sensible appearance" (Sallis 32). In this way, sense perception and sense understanding are released to themselves rather than being bound to intelligibility or a preconceived rational order. Instead of our sensations of the world and our understanding of the world being dominated by our reason and rational minds, they are freed to themselves and can show themselves in a different way. Instead of merely interpreting sense, we can open sense to itself. It is in this opening that I believe disability scholarship has something to gain. I want to step into this opening and explore it further.

Sallis gives us a demonstration and explanation of the way that sense not only refers to our sense perception or our sense as understanding but also, as a combination of the two things, refers to an upsurge of presence that constitutes our very being. Following the canon of philosophers who have offered an account of sense, Sallis determines that in understanding the act of sense perception historically "the intentional act always moves across the difference separating perceiver and perceived" (Sallis 92). Sallis remains critical of this articulation of sense perception because "the schema of intentionality states that sense-content is presentive of the object, and yet, claims that this can not be the case because presentation is intentional in character" (Sallis 94). Thus for an object to be presentive under this framework it must contain some intentionality, but we do not say that a rock intends to be present. Rather, there must be another order of presentation, there must be some other way to understand how things present themselves. Intentionality is not the only name for such a movement across space between perceiver and perceived. This Sallis calls *Image.* Image constitutes all parts of the movement that

crosses the distance between perceiver and perceived. It accounts for the whole of the elements that make up what is being perceived and also the perceivers placement in that space. The image is comprised of horizons. These horizons are the limits and bounds that hold things together and allow them to present themselves in a frontal image to the observer (who is also in the image). Things are apprehended as they show themselves via the gathering of horizons around them. By horizons we mean the literal meeting of things in appearance. The edge of a book meets its background and stands against it. That background both provides the context for the book to appear and meets its edge, concealing part of the book, so that it can show itself as a unified object in space. Horizons space the image out and allow it to appear as an image rather than as a nonsensical set of input, with individual objects indistinguishable from one another. "When a thing is apprehended it always shows itself from within a periphery, as set against a background." (Sallis 111). The combination of the things appearing and the background against which it is set, the background in which the observer themself stands, is what constitutes the image.

This image does not collapse sense perception to a mere internal action whereby the observer doubles some vision in their own mind of an object, nor does it demand that we give inanimate objects intentionality. Rather, it allows for us to account for the movement between observer and observed in a way that maintains the two as distinct while also dissolving their isolation from one another in the encounter. "Everything depends on determining the image, the sense of image, outside this discourse of interiority and yet without simply effacing the difference between what belongs to the perceiver and what belongs to the perceived" (Sallis 95). This carries implications for disability discourse as well. On the one hand it means that any instance of sense perception is already situated and constituted by a world not a mere interiority

of an individual. On the other hand those who perceive disabled people are likewise mistaken in both assuming that our experiences are internal *or* externally constituted, and their perception of disability is not only given by our presence but also their own in the encounter. The mistaken understanding of sense perception produces layers of problems for the way we engage with disability both from the perspective of the disabled and from the perspective of the observer of the disabled. If we want to understand disability not as a mere internal experience nor as a function of external observation and labeling, the collapse of interiority and exteriority that still maintains difference is incredibly useful. Disability as a concept under this framework is freed to move between perceiver and perceived, co-constituted, without having to sacrifice individual experiences of sense perception.

Of course, we do not want to do away with intelligibility all together. In speaking of the image the goal is not to speak so broadly or widely that we lose all intelligibility or sense of understanding. Instead, we are aiming to reverse the order of priorities between intelligibility and sensibility. We want it to be the case that sensible understandings of sense perception give rise to a language that can account for them rather than intelligible language overcoding the sense perception and lived experiences of individuals. We do not want experiences to be trapped behind the guise of intelligibility which is manipulated by social, linguistic, and normative structures. We see this demonstrated already with the way Sallis makes use of his terms like sense and image. Normative conception of the word image, as something produced or apprehended in the mind as a mere copy or interpretation of an object, is not sufficient or accurate to describe the notion of image Sallis has revealed as operative. This is complicated to sort out because in as much as we are reliant on language for any discourse, normative and preconceived understandings of terminology will risk obscuring the sensible understanding of

the subject we engage. How are we to acknowledge the reliance and necessity of intelligible language while avoiding the subordination of the sensible as both sense perception and as understanding? How do we avoid the traps of rigid and prescriptive language? If we want to explore and open a concept of disability to allow it to account for a broader range of experience, we must maintain sensibility and some degree of intelligibility. We nonetheless want to avoid the historical problem wherein disability discourse subordinates what is sensible to what is intelligible in law and medicine and social understandings of the world.

What is required is not merely interpreting sense differently. Rather where we now stand demands "a discourse that would double the sensible, interpret it, as it were— without recourse to the intelligible" (Sallis 33). We want sense understanding and sense perception to come together in a way that is understandable but we want that understanding to be generated out of the merger of these two kinds of sense, not as some evaluation placed on the experience afterward. To do this our discourse can not be a matter of translation "or translational appropriation of– and ultimately– the order of signs and significations" (Sallis 36). If the project remains translational it does so only in an unprecedented manner that preserves within it some active relation to the image we are exploring, not a mere re-duplication conjured in our internal minds. We have to preserve our new understanding of image as the whole of parts present in perception and not the mere visual or conceptual picture painted in the mind. This image of which we speak is accessible and something with which the discourse can engage but it is not as static or fixed as previous notions of image would have us believe. Sallis states that "the image is to be determined then, as *one's own*; one's engagement with an image is such that the image belongs to oneself" (Sallis 95). At the same time, one belongs to the image and is constituted in it. "Perceiving is situated and differentiated from the perceived, which shows itself to the

perceiving, which shines back across the distance" (95). There is an intimate and implicative relation to the image in which the perceiver is both constituted by, and constitutive of, the image. This means that when discussing disability the discussion is situated within the image in a way that implicates the perceivers to whom it belongs. At the same time that the image belongs to us, we belong to the image. In this way the image also makes the present a king of absence. What does not appear in the image, what can not be accounted for, reveals something about the world and implicates the world and the people in it by that absence. So not only must we guard against the mistaken image, one conjured in our internal minds, but we must pay particular attention not only to what is present in the image but also to what its absence reveals. We can not begin our inquiry with preconceived notions or already determined concepts that will foreclose the possibility of actually dwelling in the image, of actually experiencing it fully. One must turn to the object of inquiry and at the same time let it go so that it may present itself without interference from faculties of the mind that seek to grasp and dominate. Therefore "in one's vision, one is indeed always there alongside what is seen and does not have to first overcome, indirectly, the confines of an inviolable interiority. And yet, one's vision is always *one's own*, and in embracing things with it, one will not simply have leapt beyond oneself or turned inside out" (Sallis 96). Observer, observed, interior, exterior, presence, absence, identity and quality all shine fourth in the image but none are solely responsible for it. The same can thus be said for the image of the disabled. Disability is not merely a matter of internal sense perception, a matter of the way we are externally viewed and treated, not only a matter of world, not only a matter of presence or of absence. Instead "the duplicitous image is both one's own and of the object, yet without being itself divided or doubled" (Sallis 96). This dissolves the ordering of any particular facet or element that might claim to be the central component of disability. This new

understanding of image resolves the subordination of the sensible to the intelligible because it dissolves the ordering of all that is sensible in the image. The image as a whole must be explored so it can show itself, it can not be picked apart scientifically to provide a singular intelligible explanation that accounts for disability. The question is how then should we discuss the image of disability? How should our inquiry continue? Thankfully Sallis shows us the path forward by offering an account of the kind of language that will allow for the image to show itself rather than be dominated by our need for intelligibility.

What kind of language can provide the freeing of the discourse from the intelligible to the sensible so that we can better come to understand disability? For Sallis, idiom is the use of language that provides respite from the subordination of the sensible to the intelligible. Idiom, as turns of phrase that have established meanings but can not be understood by the sum of their parts alone, open a pocket in language for us to work with. Idiom in language is not fully captured in the intelligible nor in interpretation through a local act of parsing out signs and symbols– yet idiom remains sensible. To say that something is "a piece of cake" is understood to mean that something is easy, not that the object or circumstance being referred to is literally a piece of cake or even necessarily an object at all. We maintain our capacity for understanding without a reduction to sheer rationalist logic or interpretation of the words. The phrases can not be interpreted merely through an evaluation of their components but must be understood in their precise and circumstantial use and appearing. Idioms can not be translated into their individual words, what is sensible and meaningful in them comes from beyond what is strictly intelligible in their signs and symbols. In language the idiomatic is a site where sense is engendered in language and, without wholly abandoning intelligibility, risks the norms of intelligibility for the sake of the sensible. Sallis states that "if, becoming idiomatic, it [the discourse] remains

translational at all, it will only be so in an unheard of sense" (Sallis 36). Returning then to a discourse of disability we can use idiomatic thinking and language to open the possibility of understanding disability differently. For a group of people whose bodies constantly defy normative definitions and intelligible understandings of what bodies and senses are, this possibility is invigorating. Nonetheless, we must ensure that our discourse is not the mere ramblings of an individual but that it possesses the necessary binding power to take eventual root in intelligibility. We take to "resuming the words of one's language without taking the security of their sense for granted" and so we need to be careful not to lose all legitimacy.

Sallis offers two methods of taking up idiomatic thinking in ways that endow the discourse with appropriate binding power. In engaging idiomatically we have two methodologies, the act of remembrance and the act of phenomenology. The two are closely tied. In remembrance we have a sense of world that resists exclusion by philosophy at the limit- the idiomatic relies on some act of recalling or remembering meaning from afar. Phenomenology is related to remembrance but it is a radical orientation *from* that remembrance. "What [is} required is that sensible things be envisaged not by referral to the intelligible but rather *from themselves*" (Sallis 38). We can not seek to act as graspers or handlers of the discourse in which we seek to engage, we are not its drivers. Rather in facilitating the discourse we must free the discourse to itself, unto its own history, its own account of itself, and see what emerges. We take it as an image for circumspection, one which we can both actively participate in but are also wholly subject to. "To precede rigorously is precisely to let every step be determined by and from the things themselves" (Sallis 38) to allow the discourse to drive our engagement in it, to be open to engendering sense ourselves as it is engendered in the discourse. "Yet to proceed at all is to carry out a return to discourse, a return to speech, and most likely a return to writing" (Sallis 38).

Therefore as we engage in the discs of disability we cannot begin for ourselves to determine what disability is or how it operates via the intelligible, via definition and categorization. Instead we ought to follow the discourse through its history, through its phenomenology, and see where it opens itself for us. We have to find where the discourse is open to the application of the new understanding of sense I have outlined and where idiom may be applicable. So now we find that we have to return to the existing accounts of disability in order to open them up.

From Phenomenology to Idiom

In carrying out my discourse about disability as an act of remembrance I must acknowledge other forms of disability scholarship that contribute not only to our collective history but to the capacity for me to think through disability in this new way. Disability theory and critical phenomenology of disability both seem like easier approaches to the discussion I want to have but both remain subject to the misconceptions about sense I have spent so much time outlining. Neither account for the image as a whole. Even the cutting edge of disability phenomenology falls short of being able to account for the appearance and experience of disability due to an inherent tension in the language being used. By evaluating one existing example of disability discourse I can now begin to show more precisely the need for idiom as a mode of language to account for disability. This need will arise directly out of the discourse to show itself if we look carefully.

Disability scholar and activist Elizabeth Barnes is one of the strong contemporary voices of disability theory. Her work focuses often on both what disability is like and what disability is. Her engagement with the social and medical models of disability have undoubtedly opened many doors for thought within the disability community. Her work is often highly political and situated

within the legal and medical frameworks that disabled people must navigate to survive. Barnes is largely interested in “a way to describe disabled people's lived experiences in terms not confined to oppressions that have excluded and constrained us” (Wieseler 121). Nonetheless, critical phenomenologists like Christine Wiesler have begun to point out how many disability scholars including Barnes remain limited in their practical and political work because of mistakes made at the conceptual level. Weiseler in a paper calling for critical disabled phenomenology states “there will [always] be people who do not neatly fit into the category of disabled or non disabled because there is a spectrum rather than a binary, and lived experiences will always exceed definitions” (Weiseler 121). Scholars like Barnes, and even the notorious author of *Crip Theory* Robert McRurer, encounter definitional issues at the point of attempting to categorize or conform disability as an experience in the terms of the legal and medical systems which disabled people must operate. These systems, and the language they use, threaten to make disability into a very limited discourse because of the emphasis and focus placed (for justified reasons) on intelligibility within the system. Weiseler recognizes this concern and pivots toward a critical phenomenology instead. Following Sallis we find that phenomenology alone is ill equipped to escape the subordination of the sensible to the intelligible but the work done by phenomenologists may give us insight into our path forward with Sallis.

Weiseler states that "impairment and disability are abstractions that attempt to capture commonalities between people with extremely diverse range of bodyminds while setting aside important differences” (Weiseler 122) and that “these are fundamental reasons the concepts of disability, impairment, or a combination of these notions are inadequate for theorizing the lived experiences of disabled people” (Weiseler 122). Her turn to phenomenology comes out of the desire to reduce the degree to which we erase difference in the name of intelligibility which

seems very much to be in line with my and Sallis's aims. However Weiseler, rather than beginning with the sensible, starts her discourse in the social. She claims that critical phenomenology can account "for how contingent social structures shape bodymind experience as well as the ways that we, collectively, could change social structures in order to make different sorts of experiences possible" (123). She also states that there is an ethical commitment to attend to "the ways that power and history shape lived experiences" (123). The problem I sense arising in this sort of orientation toward the discourse of disability is twofold. The first concern is that understandings of our history and relationships to power are shaped acutely by the sensible for disabled people. The loss of a sense is easily identified as some of the earliest demarcated disabilities. Vision, hearing, speech, reading, touch, sensation etc. are all fundamental aspects of how we understand relationships to history and power but they are not aspects of all power relations, particularly for those of us without these functions. Beginning with a history and narrative of power that has already been interpreted through the normatively intelligible risks once again subjugating the uniquely sensible world of disability to the sensible world of ability. How can we carry out remembrance without the sensible at the forefront? My second concern is similar, how can we carry out phenomenology if the discourse has already been shaped by the subjugation of the sensible to the intelligible? Does critical phenomenology adequately maintain its binding power within the discourse without subjugating the sense to the intelligibility? I think Weiseler's own criticism of other forms of disability scholarship can give us insight. She states the abstraction of disability ignores important distinctions and is thus a reason "the concepts of disability, impairment, or a combination of these notions are inadequate for theorizing the lived experiences of disabled people" (122). However Weiseler herself, along with virtually every other scholar of disability, uses the language of "disabled people" in her work. Situated within

the very sentence where she condemns the use of the term disability given its limited intelligibility she also makes use of the concept of disability in a sensible way. This sensible use of the word disabled is subordinated within the argument to the indictment of the term 'disability' as inadequate in terms of intelligibility because it neglects specificity. What Weiseler, and other phenomenologists, are engaged in is a translational act that seeks to bring intelligibility to the forefront through refinement. She "seeks not only to describe but also repair the world" (124) through making intelligible the ambiguity and translating the lived experiences of disability. This, I fear, opens the door to the problems of misunderstanding the relationship between sense perception and sense understanding that I have already outlined. The contradiction of the condemnation of the term disability immediately followed by its sensible use shows an immediate contradiction that we ought to address. At the very least we risk re-subordinating disabled experiences to the confines of intelligible and ableist logics and language.

I want to be clear that I in no way mean to imply that critical phenomenology, or any other disability theory, has not been incredibly valuable and even life saving. Often the discourse serves to provide not only accounts of history and lived reality but also valuable information about the world and social operations that are necessary for survival. What I am doing here is taking the space I have been given as a scholar of disability who is not currently fighting for my survival to attempt to renew this discourse with more possibility than the capacity for sheer survival. I am not seeking a tool to use for political liberation, though I believe this project will have political implications. What I am engaged in is a discourse that attempts to remain as obedient as possible to the demands of the sensible within the discourse. I may borrow some of the claims and knowledge generated within other disability scholarships but I hope to be working a new ground with a new sense of possibility engendered in Sallis's methodology. If we return to

Sallis now with the aims of phenomenologists and theorists in mind we can spot something quite obvious. Weiseler's sensible use of the term "disabled people", along with many other sensible uses throughout disability scholarship, is idiomatic. We know what she means when she uses it, and yet we simultaneously acknowledge that any prescriptive definition is inadequate. While acknowledging that the term disability is definitionally incomplete she makes use of the term disabled in a way that is sensible, we know what she refers to, but that sense is not derived from the sheer definitional meaning of the word.

For those who may immediately recoil at my claim that the term disabled and disabled are often used idiomatically, let us engage some rigid definitions as a testing space. Oxford Dictionary defines disability in two ways

1. a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities.

2. a disadvantage or handicap, especially one imposed or recognized by the law.

To any English speaker it is clear that sleep is not a disability, yet the condition of sleep would satisfy the first definition. To any sensible person handcuffs would not be understood as a disability (though they may be disabling) and yet they satisfy the second definition. Truthfully, any common illness or cold would qualify under the first definition, and under conditions like the global lockdown for COVID-19 perhaps even the second, yet we typically refer to these as illness or sickness not disability. There is a permanency to disability in concept and yet many disabilities are temporally complex. Stephen Hawking quite famously denied the label of disability entirely. He claimed multiple times during his life that his physical conditions did not limit his movement, senses, or activities and that it was not a disadvantage to his life. With enough money or accommodation it is somewhat understandable that one might *feel* this way and

yet most disabled scholars and even common individuals will for all time refer to Stephen Hawking as a disabled individual. The definition of disability is incredibly broad and even if we just discuss it as a compound word, “dis” (not or apart from) and “ability” as the means or capacity to do something, we have a term that is applicable to any form of social or physical barrier. A human is disabled from traveling if they can’t afford the means of travel. A human is disabled from being in public if they cannot or will not abide by particular social rules such as clothing and behavior. Our primary method of addressing crime is to simply dis-able individuals from participating in society. The definitional term is not adequate to contain the content we are discussing. Yet we have the sense, and for the sake of the discourse probably should maintain, that disability is not just a nonsense term easily applied to anyone. Disability has shaped and defined the course of entire lives and has real implications on possibilities available to individuals. The material conditions of violence upon those somehow labeled disabled can not be ignored nor can their inner experiences of sense that defy intelligibility. It may be true that thinking in terms of enabling and disabling is a useful liberatory practice but to understand and engage in that practice “disability” as we understand it must still be thought through. If we take disability idiomatically and move forward with the discourse we can allow for the sensible engagement of subjects within the discourse as potentially disabled, disabling, or as a disability. Likewise we may start to think about enablement, and ability as a whole as likewise ideomadic. Sensibly and in our everyday use it is clear that for something to be disabling is not a satisfactory condition for it to be understood as *a* disability. A lack of shoes can be disabling but we don't call people with feet disabled.

What is ability? What does it mean to be en-abled or dis-abled? Does the average person have the ability to sit perfectly still for hours and hours without going mad? Unlikely, yet this is

a reality that paralyzed people face all the time and have the ability to do with ease? Ability is socially framed in many ways, but it is also conceptually defined by a sort of capacity. Sallis discusses how space and light are themselves invisible to human perception but nonetheless they constitute the conditions for visibility (Sallis Ethicality and Imagination, 26). Likewise it seems to be the case that in the social construction of ability and disability depend deeply on one another. Possibility for disability enables ability, and the possibility for ability enables disability. This dynamic is carried into social spaces and codified in social norms but the interdependence of one on the other is often ignored. More precisely, while the condition of disablement is often framed in relation to ability, the dependent relationship of ability on disability is often ignored. If the presence of severe pain is what makes me "disabled" then it is also true that it is only the absence of severe pain that makes another "abled." But if we were to reverse the social context and ask the "abled" "Do you have the ability to endure excruciating pain without so much as flinching or making a face?" they often say no. So the question socially becomes "disabled from what? Able to what? Enabled to what?" Because if you were to say "Do you have the ability to endure excruciating pain without so much as flinching or making a face if we give you plenty of morphine?" then the "abled" may be able to endure my conditions after all. Likewise, if particular social conditions changed, regardless of my pain I would be able to endure the conditions of an abled society much more easily. I do not feel that I need to continue with this particular example though there are hundreds of similar examples written into disability scholarship. Demonstrations of how paraplegics engage in sex in ways the abled simply don't access is another good example. But what these examples serve to show for the sake of my project is not just the social conditions that constitute ability and disability, but the tangible interdependence of the concepts on one another and move together not in a definitional relation,

but an idiomatic relationship built on cultural and historical understandings that can not be captured concretely. So where is this problem coming from? How did we get into the habit of addressing disability and the world in general in terms of pieces and parts and why do we seek definitions rather than idioms to account for them? In order to answer this question we need to better understand the way that nature has historically been taken up and understood not only by philosophers but by humans in general. If idiomatic language, language that is not rigidly set in definitions, is going to be our methodology for discussing disability we need to be clear about the problem we hope it will resolve. In order to gain a clearer problem of our relationship to nature I can now turn back to Sallis who gives an account of nature that describes the problem at hand.

The Dynamic Nature of Disability in the Elemental

What we have now come to is a problem with the lack of a static nature of disability. We can think disability idiomatically but how are we to make sense of the tangible confusion that arises when people encounter disability? How do we come to an idiomatic view of disability that is comprehensive and sensible in a concrete way but still accounts for the movement that is present in disability? We have to sketch out the dynamics at play in disability experiences and recover a more dynamic view of the world as a whole.

The world is not static, it moves, it is a dynamic process. As phenomenologists like Hegel have shown, everything exists in a dual relationship to itself and other things. The body is no different. The body as a dynamic being moves through space and time not as a singular static object but as a system of moving parts all connected and collected into one self. The body changes. On a daily cycle the body's heart rate, digestive system, respiratory system, and neurological system shift to accommodate various activities and conditions. During sleep the

body's function shifts to such a degree that it would be impossible to maintain those functions while awake. The heart rate lowers, the digestive system enters a new phase, breathing stills to accommodate a lack of movement and enable maximum efficiency. On the day to day we may not notice much change in our bodies but all bodies age. Bones shift into different positions, muscle groups shift their dominance to accommodate weakening joint structures, neurological structures build themselves and corrode, over time death creeps in and the system slows to a halt. Life is not a static thing. It is a dynamic process that only works, only counts as life, while it is in motion. Death is categorized by many as stillness but even in death the body for a time moves. The body processes death. It enters states of progressing muscle tension, the bowels expel, the process of decay begins. Our classification of brain death shows us that our consideration of death has less to do with any mechanical process and more to do with how the system relates to its environment. Death is a matter of sense.

With the classification of brain death the primary consideration is the nature of the brain stem. The inability to pump one's own heart, to fill and expel one's own lungs are only one question in the consideration of death. We are privileged to have progressed medically to the point where we can keep hearts and lungs moving externally. In considering death, doctors first rule out chemical imbalances, sedation, temperature, and external factors that may be tampering with one's responsiveness to sensation. Only after these factors have been ruled out, then brain death can be considered. Where brain death is ultimately determined is in the response to external stimulus, in our capacity to gauge whether the body has any sense of what is around it. We check reflexes, the gag reflex, eye reflexes, responses to pain and light. If the body does not respond, if there is no indication of sense perception, then a person may be declared brain dead. Someone in a coma may need medicine to operate their bodily mechanics but the line between

life and death is a sensible line directly tied to sense perception. Life, even in the medical and scientific sense, is our relation to the world around us.

It seems obvious then that in defining disability and seeking to understand its meaning that we should abandon static notions of conditions and seek to embrace an understanding that is derived from the dynamic relation of disability to the world. But it will also require us to treat the world as a whole differently. We can not treat the body as a static thing and neither mode of inquiry that he calls monstrology. Monstrology is a mode of inquiry and discourse that prioritizes not only the movement of all things, but the role of the natural world, the elements and nature, in the presence of the image. Monstrology is taking seriously the reality of nature as a moving thing that holds everything together. But to seriously engage in monstrology, to work in a method that is monstrological and gives rise to an idiomatic understanding of disability, we have to understand the reality of the natural world. We need to recover a sense of the elemental and of the natural world that is also freed from the subordination of the sensible to the intelligible. A monstrological approach to disability will demand that we understand how we relate to the world, how we come to encounter it, and how the dual nature of sense is given to us.

In discussing what we mean by nature, Sallis begins by indicating notions of nature and the natural world that primarily posit nature as something to be extracted. There exists a linguistic "bond that enforced the reduction of nature to a historical product" (Sallis 149) and that does not seek to account for nature as something that shows itself but rather nature as something that limits. Ancient conceptions of woods, forest, and trees "names nothing capable of showing itself as such but rather only marks the limit of nature, nothing prevents constructing nature as nothing but the limit up to which everything would be assimilable" (Sallis 149). Likewise, disability faces a similar problem where natural bodies or abilities are only viewed as

the limit to which everything else is measured. Sallis claims that movements like historical materialism, which aimed to reject exploitative philosophy "remains in utter solidarity with it as regards to the alienation of nature" (149) and that the colonial boom of exploitation that emerged out of materialist ways of thinking supports this view. In order to interrupt modern philosophy we have to recover a different understanding of nature. Sallis turns to the Greek term φύσις. "Φύσις names the way in which things of a certain kind– natural beings– come manifestly to pass" (Sallis 150). It is characterized by movement and is continued within all natural beings as what Sallis calls an indwelling of their movement. This sense of nature, φύσις, has a double directionality. As plants grow upwards they also root themselves deeper into the earth, the capacity they have to show themselves is related to the way they conceal themselves. In this way nature echoes. But this echoing of nature has historically been stifled. "Nature is decomposed in order that natural things, deprived of their retreat, might be assimilated to the sphere of what can be governed, controlled, and ultimately [...] made, produced" (Sallis 152). In decomposing nature this way, humanity has also decomposed itself, our natural bodies. We have broken them down into parts that can be controlled and produced. To avoid this instrumentalization of nature, to return to it a sense of understanding that keeps open the possibility of a movement, Sallis wants us to understand nature as the gathering of elementals. By this he means quite plainly the elementals of fire, of fog, of sky and earth, of water and mountains. This allows us to "redetermine nature itself as a holding sway of elementals" (Sallis 154). Rather than reducing nature to a scientific process of ever reducing parts like elements and atoms, Sallis calls us to view nature not in a scientific approach but rather an approach that "simultaneously twists free of the determination of the elements as constituting the 'from which' of composition" (Sallis 154). Nature thus ought not be understood as a question of composition, but of manifestation. All

things appear within nature are bathed in the elemental. All things emerge out of the background and the setting made manifest by elementals that are held together in sway, that overlap and combine with one another. In many ways, elementals lack distinct horizons and yet provide the space for all horizons to be gathered. We must ask how things come to be manifest, not simply what composes them. We must ask this question precisely because the way we come to encounter things is in their manifestness, not in their individual parts, not in their composition. The question of composition only ever follows an encounter with something that is already showing itself to be there. The being there of the thing, the way it appears, is determined not only by *its* composing parts, but the background from which it emerges, the horizons that bind it, and that which recedes from it so that it can be shown as an image with edges and shape.

So when asking about bodies, about what a disability is, we ought not ask about composition. Instead we should turn to the question of manifestation, the relationships to the elemental, the relationship to sense, that gives rise to such a thing as disability. Disability can not be scientifically dissected but can be monstrologically investigated in its situatedness within nature. This is where an idiomatic understanding of it can arise. Instead of robbing nature of its reserve, instead of aiming to grasp clearly all facets of disability, we can "turn back to the elemental in the exorbitant sense, as those anterior elements from which manifestation proceeds" (Sallis 155) and likewise take up the question of disability in a new way. In order to do this, we must have another discussion about our relationship to the image and to the elemental. We need to ask how things appear, how disability appears. We need to better understand what that relationship is so that we can understand how it might change. To explain this relationship between individuals and the world around them, Sallis accounts for the force of imagination. We

will turn there now before once again coming back to discuss the implications of the elemental more fully.

III. Imagination

If we are going to correct the mistaken understanding of nature, the mistaken approach to bodies, we need to have a force that allows us to correct the trajectory of our thought and engagement. Because mistaken understandings of nature lead to mistaken understandings of disability, reimagining disability will require correctly engaging language through an act of imagination that escapes the historical and normative problems set up in our relationship to nature. Understanding imagination then is another way of understanding the broad range of things that come to be manifest. Imagination is what will allow us to account for the extreme experiences of disability. These extreme experiences, of pain, of difference, of life, bear with them insights that are being missed due to a lack of adequate imagination and a lack of adequate language. Sallis shows us not only how this failure of imagination is taking place, but how a different articulation of imagination can let us recover a relationship to nature that will be open to the new language we want to use to engage it. Disability discourse will become a matter of using the language of idiom imaginatively to avoid the way that language limits imagination by limiting our understanding of the appearance of the natural world.

The classic definition of imagination understands it as the internal conjuring of an image that can correlate or not correlate to reality. Generally we think of imaginaries as fantasy, not real things, stories and fables we tell for various purposes. We make imaginaries but they also come to us in dreams and the stories of others. We understand them to be external and non rational. Sallis wants to engage a different sense of imagination, not one related to unreality, but one distinctly tied to the real. Sallis does not take imagination to be a thing, rather he posits that imagination is an essential faculty in our engagement with the world. For Sallis the real is present to us only by way of the imagination, our sense of image is constituted through the

imagination as a force that brings reality to presence. Sallis outlines three different kinds of imagination. These modes of imagination track directly onto the question of sense, the natural world, and of language that I have already laid out. Tractive imagination gives us a mode for recovering an understanding of sense and horizons, elemental imagination accounts for the way things show themselves out of the elemental, and poetic imagination shows us how we can remake and reimagine possibility, figures, and engagements with the natural world and therefore our bodies as well. Understanding these modes of imagination and how they operate can help us better understand how it is that disability scholarship can make use of imagination not only as the generation of imagined futures and narratives that may or may not come to pass, but also as forces present in our daily interactions and lives that may show us how to better relate to and situate ourselves in the world.

Tractive Imagination

Tractive imagination is the form of imagination that allows us to hold together the image as an image. Rather than sheerly seeing things as a blob, tractive imagination is what gathers together horizons around things so that we can distinguish them from one another. Showing and self showing more specifically "requires the effecting of horizons" (Sallis 123) in that horizons must be gathered around things so they can appear. In showing, a thing "shows itself as holding in reserve other aspects in presenting of which it would remain one and the same thing," (Sallis 124) a portion of a book or a cup must remain concealed so that it appears in three dimensional space. If all faces appeared at once it would not appear with dimensionality or intelligibility. There is no thing of which we observe the whole at once, that is a simple reality of the world we live in. Something is always concealed, that concealment is folded behind some horizon where

the visible becomes invisible and the background meets the edge of any object. The showing of anything always includes some concealment. The tractive imagination is the force that allows us to operate alongside this co-concealing and appearing that happens. Our tractive imagination is what makes sense perception and sense as understanding to be possible together, in the same moment. Because horizons are the holding of both presence and absence together, they are essential for any showing. Tractive imagination is the imagination that comprehends, makes sense of, gathers together horizons into something sensible.

What is tricky about horizons that necessitates the tractive imagination is that horizons at once belong to the thing of which they are a horizon but is not a part of it. The profile of a thing is not a part of the thing and yet it is essential to the appearance of that thing. Horizons maintain the double character of belonging to a thing and being separate from it. "Horizions cannot, then, as such be rendered present, but they must nonetheless come to bound the upsurge of presence" and it is this binding that is undertaken by tractive imagination. Horizons are not there, but they are spaced around there and space out the there so "hovering between protraction and retraction, imagination lets things that are present show themselves as hovering between determination and indetermination" (Sallis 125). This is a forceful process. It is something that binds and holds. It is a force that can somehow bring together what can not be brought together, revealing and concealing. At the same time, imagination "does so without violating– without assimilating or canceling– the force that holds it apart" (Sallis 128) and therefore is not forcing anything but only allowing something to show itself "merely lending to things present its force of protraction and retraction" (Sallis 128).

A recognition of this hovering can at once both liberate disabled people to our own discourse that need not be statically fixed, and allow us to reveal to others what our relation to

hovering can show them about reality. Moreover, the forcefulness of imagination can displace power. Where power is directed and intentional, wielded by people, force is not directed or aimed by individuals. Instead force is already vectored in its very existence, it is always already deployed and simply waiting to be engaged with. Thus we can align ourselves with this force while side stepping powers that would seek to subjugate us. We can align ourselves with the understanding of imagination as a force already in motion, already accounting for, not only our realities but the reality of all appearance.

This form of imagination allows us to uniquely identify a few problems that face disability discourse. The first is that acts of imagination within the field of disability are not mere fantasy but considerations emerging from unique relationships to the concealing and revealing that disabled people encounter. There are a number of disability scholars who emphasize the necessity of imagination in disability scholarship and justice work. *HandiLand: The Crippiest Place on Earth* is one such piece that emphasizes the need for the capacity to imagine grounded futures designed by and for disabled people. These futures need to be imagined with a distinct relationship to what is revealed and concealed in the present. Likewise, as is the case with many politics or theory of change, Crip *Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* centers our capacity to think about how we might change our world by revealing particular things that are concealed. The forward to this foundational text on disability is by Michael Berube. He titles his forward "Another World is Possible" and the conclusion of the book ultimately discusses a new mode of viewing the world that involves "seeing the disabled." These works along with many others serve as core disability texts and rely heavily on the force of imagination without clearly outlining what that force is or how imagination works. Now, with Sallis's articulations, we have a more concrete grasp on how we can take up the force of imagination in ways that avoid

historical problems that force disabled people and discourse into pre-defined boxes. By embracing the sort of hovering of the world between protraction and retraction, by guarding against the subordination of the sensible to the intelligible, by adequately understanding the way sense perception and sense understanding come together in imagination that is not fantasy but grounded in reality, disability discourse is strengthened.

Specifically, the discourse is strengthened through the use of idiomatic language which already accounts for all of these factors. What is required now in the discourse is a "matter of delimiting force by regressing from the thing as something possessing a manifold of properties to the self-showing covertly taken for granted with the thing and anterior to its perceptual self-showing" (Sallis 131). For the sake of disability, this once again means that we will have to stop addressing disability as a set of fixed properties or qualities possessed by an individual body or by an individual space/society that impacts bodies. Rather we have to stop taking for granted and must interrogate seriously the self showing of disabled bodies where they appear in the natural world. Historically this has been not only impossible due to philosophical misconceptions about sense and imagination, but also because things like ugly laws present in Chicago until the seventies made the image of disability and difference illegal to present, illegal show, illegal to engage. Now that disabled people are, like never before in history, allowed to be in the public sphere[3] we need to move forward with making sense of our appearances in nature rather than working off of conceptions built in our absence and without our presence. The way that disability is visually identified by others as bodily difference often fails to truly engage the tractive imagination and pays little attention to the unique showing of an individual. Rhetorician Kenneth Burke in his book *Language and Symbolic Action* discusses the way that individual appearances

[3] To the degree that we are physically able

are overcoded by preconceived notions. Before the appearance even has a chance to show itself, assumptions are made and concrete categories are applied. Burke specifically discusses what he calls terministic screens that are "composed of terms through which humans perceive the world, and that direct attention away from some interpretations and toward others" (Burke 131). Here Burke is again highlighting the way in which our failure of imagination, to allow for things to show themselves, is deeply tied to our relationship to language. In using language that has already skewed the discourse toward a particular interpretation, we lose sight of the true self showing of things. The tractive imagination, in combination only with forms of language that would allow it to operate with its full force, can free us from these screens. Idiom comes as a linguistic tool that allows for tractive imagination to be operative without being superseded by modes of language that would seek to limit tractive imaginations capacity for seeing self showing. Therefore the discourse on disability now has not only a need for idiomatic language due to the nature of its own internal contradictions as I laid out in the previous section. But idiom is now supported by the very structure of self showing that is imagination. Because imagination is central to disability discourse, it seems idiom ought also be our language.

One of the precarities of disability is the constant feeling of being a fish out of water. Every day I take my wheelchair onto campus. My chair goes about 6.5 mph and generally is close to human jogging pace. I am certainly slower than cars, bikes, and electric scooters but I am faster than most pedestrians. In addition to my chair's many features it is 400lbs and has a bright set of headlights which are easily seen at a distance. The strangest thing about the chair is how in every instance that I encounter another person we find ourselves caught in a weird bind. Those who see the chair approaching in the dark verbally proclaim "what is that?!" as I near and pass, unable to even place me. Cars that see me at cross walks stop and stutter trying to decide if

I have the right of way of a vehicle or a pedestrian. Bikes treat me *almost* like a bike, pedestrians treat me *almost* like a pedestrian, cars treat me *almost* like a car. No matter with whom I am interacting, I am never quite in place. The most frustrating thing when I am out and about is the people who see my chair and immediately feel caught between a rock and a hard place. They freeze up, they stand in the middle of the walkway as though that will make it easier for me to move around them when in reality it only means that the flow of my movements are interrupted by their lack of a capacity to make a decision. People stop at doors unsure if they should hold them open for me or if that would be patronizing. What few do, what I wish more would do, is actually just look at me and see. I can speak, it is fairly easy to suggest my intended direction with a gesture or glance, those who actually look at me instead of just my chair often share an exchange that is clarifying. But for those to whom the chair has already foreclosed the possibility of them seeing *me*, for those who lack imagination or capacity to see me appear with and alongside the horizons of my chair, they always end up tied in knots in my presence. People flinch and startle as my chair goes silently by even though there is no risk to their person and a bike does not concern them the same way.

This problem of being a fish out of water, viewed with pity and confusion, is compounded even more any time I try to account for my inner perception of my senses and body. People ask how I am doing and fail to comprehend when my answer is that my ribs have slipped out of place with a straight face. What does one do when the fish out of water is gasping for air but also doing its taxes just fine? Even most medical providers fail to believe me about what I describe going on in my own body unless I allow myself to perform for them a display of physical action *they* think fits the experience I am describing. There is no precise language to describe pain. The pain scale posted in every doctor's office that goes from 1 to 10 makes no

sense if my daily amount of pain is an amount that would send most people running to the ER. Yet, there is some language that already seems to be developed whereby certain sensory experiences can be vaguely conveyed. To "feel it in one's bones" as an idiom for premonition or deep knowledge is a turn of phrase that resonates with me because there are those of us who do literally feel shifts in the world around us through our bones. It is a common joke as much as it is a known reality that the elderly often sense barometric pressure shifts in their joints, the less stable your body becomes the more impacted it is by shifts in nature. I know when spring has come because my allergies flare, and I know even if I am in the dark if the elevation has changed because my ears pop and my joints swell. But this is not something that appears externally, rather my attunement to my body in this way is something that I can only convey to others verbally if I myself have the capacity to note what is going on. Tractive imagination can resolve problems where my physical appearance poses a problem in the way others relate to me, but there is something else demanded in order for me to account for the inner experience I have in relation to the world. This takes us back to the question of the elemental, the question of nature itself.

Elemental Imagination

Sallis marks the limit of tractive imagination in its incapacity to truly comprehend or make sense of the elemental. So while tractive imagination is a useful tool in understanding the profile of some appearances[4] the elemental poses a distinct problem because of its relation to horizons. Unlike other things that appear, the elementals around us lack discernible horizons. Elementals have a blurry nature. Fog is not apprehended the same way that a cup is, the mountain does not have a clear ending as it meets the earth, clouds are less individual forms then

[4] Like the appearance of disability in the form of visual representation like wheelchairs

they are a blended expanse of water being vaguely held together. The elemental, in its uniqueness, demands its own form of imagination to be comprehended. This imagination, rather than being a force that gathers and holds together horizons, is an imagination that ought not be structured the way the tractive imagination is.

If one tries to apply the tractive imagination to the elemental, there arises a problem whereby we superimpose boundaries and outlines to aspects of nature that have no definitive ending or beginning. Our historic mistake of reducing nature as a realm for resource extraction, as an area that can be defined and conquered rather than the conditions for all appearance, is tied to a failure to engage the distinct elemental imagination over other forms of apprehension. It is important that we treat the elemental differently because "the elementals will always have laid out in advance– prearticulated– the ways that humans come to pass, and it is from the most elemental configurations of nature that human beings acquire their primary sense of height and ascendancy, of direction of such, and of expanse and limit" (Sallis 171). In simpler terms, we are always already thrown into a world that is constituted by the holding sway of elementals. The natural environment in which humans find themselves determines our relationship to our own survival and therefore has implications on our ways of thinking, our ways of building, our ways of being. Even in the most urban of environments the air we breathe, the presence of pollution or the lack of capacity to see the stars at night, frame our relationship to the world, our sense of security or vulnerability. All things that appear to the tractive imagination do so out of a space that is already constituted by the elemental, the elementals provide the space in which horizons can be spaced out and gathered together. This space, as a collection of elementals, is always in sway, always itself showing and receding. The fog gives way to the appearance of a tree or a car only as a slow fading into showing, not as a clear demarcation of boundaries and edges.

The elemental imagination, then, is a mode of approach and understanding the elemental that does not seek to grasp concretely the holding sway taking place of the elemental. It is also not a relationship to nature that places any emphasis on our ability to extract things from nature. Again we move away from the purview of composition and toward the understanding of manifestation. Therefore rather than trying to account for inner experiences of pain or symptoms by medically analyzing and breaking down all the little mechanical functions that might cause my pain receptors to flare, we can recover some relation to nature that might be able to account for these experiences in a way that does not require all bodies to be reduced to the same mechanical functions. Humans have histories of reading the elementals in the world. We learned to predict coming storms before we ever understood the nature of our atmosphere. Likewise, many people who live with disabilities and bodies that can not be accounted for within normal schema of explanation, learn to read the elemental at play in ourselves without scientific expertise.

It is difficult to explain that I can often tell based on the movement or staticness of my digestive system which foods I can eat on a given day. It is not a science I learned or perfected but rather an act of listening to sensations most just don't have. I know that I will be sick in two weeks when the skin on my palms begins to peel and I know that in heat the swelling of my joints will place different demands on what mobility aids I need. My body and its internal systems, like fog, are not concrete discernible systems. They are all interconnected, overlapping, pain in my fingers is connected to the pain in my knee, and the whole thing is constantly in motion. Sallis posits that we are bathed in the elemental, and this is not a metaphor. Our bodies are fluids and gases and air and earth and in constant movement that is impacted by the external elementals that move in and through us. I notice more than most the shifts in temperature,

humidity, in smell and in air quality, in air pressure and in light. My body is not insulated from the elemental the same way most are, it is radically exposed. Because of this it is easy for me to see how understandings of the elemental, how elemental imagination, is an inroad to understanding and making sense of the body and our sense perception. Like the earth, my body is not a *from which* of material composition but rather a *from which* of manifestation of possibility, of experience, of being. My body is not a site for extraction but a holding sway of possibility. In this sense, all bodies as bathed in the elemental are the *from which* of manifestation. This turns the concept of disability on its head.

If disability is the dis-ability to do something, it can not possibly be the dis-abilty to manifest in and out of the elemental. In being bathed in the elemental, we already possess the capacity to be manifest inherently in our being. Whatever we call disability may limit us in some social or normative senses but it does not alter our being bathed in the elemental. It does not alter our relation to the natural world as a relation that is open to possibility and to showing. The misconception that disabled people are divorced from nature because we can not hunt our own food or trek into mountains derives from a failure to understand nature as the holding sway of elementals. Nature is not for extraction, and so the disabled person's inability to extract from nature is not a failure of our being or our relationship to nature, in fact it opens us to a more comprehensive understanding of the elementals we find ourselves engaged in. As much as disabled people have sensory experiences that are free from predetermined paradigms of reason, we are often more able to identify the ways in which the elemental constitutes the *from which* we come.

The failure of communication or understanding that occurs then between disabled people and others is not only a question of our physical appearance and of language, but also a problem

with the fact that in many ways people are radically closed off to nature as elementals. Nature is viewed dominantly as a site of extraction, the body too exists for production, for the sake of performing abilities. Part of what makes the experiences of disability hard to convey, what forecloses the range of the experiences acknowledged, is the failure to understand a relationship to the natural world that has nothing to do with extraction, production, or concrete definitive pieces that compose the system. So not only is the social appearance of disability complicated by the misconceptions we have about sense, understanding, and tractive imagination, but the internal experience of disability is from the start made impossible to convey due to a confusion about the reality of the natural world. We are already in the image, disabled people are often understood as being defined by their environment and bodies and this is true, but in how Sallis articulates sense, imagination, elementals, image, so is literally everyone else. Likewise just as everyone constitutes the image of which they are a part, disabled people also move with the force of the elemental, with the force of tractive imagination. The difference in our being has more to do with misconceptions others make about their own existence than some inherent deficit of our being.

All of us experience sense in the dual way sallis has described, in the encounter with the disabled it just becomes clear the degree to which sense perception and sense understanding are entangled. All of us operate with the tractive imagination, the disabled body merely exposes moments where people reject that force and fail to see appearing instead of overcoding with knowing. All of us are bathed in the elemental, the unique vulnerability[5] of the disabled body simply exposes the utter boundlessness of nature and the way it moves in and through us. There can be no language to describe the 'thing' disability, there can be no summing up of its parts

[5] We are all vulnerable, you just don't see the need for shoes the same way you see the need for a wheelchair.

because its parts are all simply given by existence. Instead, a language for disability can only account for its appearing, can only idiomatically offer a sense of understanding that is tied to how we appear to ourselves and how we appear to others that is not a mere summation of parts.

This understanding of tractive and elemental imaginations have then opened us to a new way of looking at what disability is but have not yet allowed us to imagine new futures or possibilities for ways of relating to disabled bodies or providing disabled people with the base accommodations needed for survival. As a species we have been fairly good at making sense of the needs of bodies that fall within a particular norm, those who can extract from nature have also been able to channel nature in particular ways that allow them to navigate it. We have built houses and clothing and cars and roads, we have wells and food production and sunscreen. What we don't have is the equivalent tools and equipment for those we take to be disabled. All the equipment built for disabled people is built to allow us to produce, to extract from nature, to conform to already existing schemas of relation to nature and the world. Equipment and accommodations are not built from and out of the self showing of our needs, but rather built to allow conformation to preconceived static constructions. We don't approach asking what disabled people need by asking what we need to live good lives, to live in ways that allow us to thrive in our own manifestness. Instead we ask how we can give disabled people the capacities we deem necessary for function in normative worlds. Cochlear implants are again a good example. Rather than asking how we might structure relationships to Deaf humans in a way that may allow them to show themselves regardless of hearing capacity, we seek to give them the capacity to hear. Even the social model of disability that says we should teach people sign language rather than provide cochlear implants still relies on linguistic norms of spoken

languages in order to teach sign rather than conform to the structures of sign language determined by and out of Deaf communities. This problem is where Sallis's final articulation of imagination comes to offer a solution and insight into how we ought to imagine disabled futures. This imagination he calls the poetic imagination.

Poetic Imagination and Disabled Futures

The final form of imagination laid out by Sallis is perhaps the most empowering for disabled people. This form of imagination is one directly tied to our capacity to encounter the natural world and convey things about its appearance to others. Without the poetic imagination, we would not be able to channel the elemental world around us into something new, into something generative and creative. Poetic imagination thus is the mode of imagination that will finally let us generate a language of idiom, generate a new mode of discourse, to paint a true image of how disability appears in the world.

I love to dance, I love music and rhythm and the flow that occurs between body and environment. Before my condition progressed, I was an athlete. I found joy on the soccer field where plays came together in perfect synchronization. I embraced my culture with folk dances and music. I am a third degree black belt in TaeKwonDo because the patterns of the forms were so simply freeing from any of my concerns that it was easy to push my body to its limit in their name. I loved to walk with my headphones blaring, marching to the beat of whatever songs had gripped my soul. I used to hike the mountains in my back yard of Alaska with a pace that did not come from me but was derived from whatever artist's tempo played in my ears or the singing of the birds around me. When it first became clear that my body would no longer allow such activities I grieved. But what I know now is there was no need for such grief. I no longer hike

mountains and I no longer run the course of a soccer field. I can not take 5 hour walks in the middle of the night or join a folk dance at a wedding the way I used to. But nothing much has been lost. My connection to the world around me, the rhythm and flow between me and my environment has not disappeared. It has simply taken on new forms, new faces. I pushed my voice to become faster and more precise with my language, I learned to sign and speak with my hands, I sit on the porch and paint, even on days where I can not leave my bed the music I listen to invigorates. Though I no longer hike mountains, I gain more from the experience of wandering their foothills. Though I no longer join circles of people dancing I am always dancing in my mind. As I navigate the swarms of pedestrians who don't know what to do with me I see a spacing that feels the same as the puzzles that faced me on the soccer field. I find my spacing, I have my rhythm, I move with the world around me and notice the beauty of it more.

The third and final form of imagination that John Sallis describes is perhaps the most powerful. This imagination, poetic imagination, is our capacity within the image to channel the elemental, to work as a medium for the constant moving and spacing it plays out. Salis says that the poetic imagination is what allows the painter to see the light, to produce an image that is not a mere duplication of what she sees before her but to capture its movement, its hovering, its spacing in a way that is truly new. Poetic imagination is not a fabrication, it is not "a matter of copying, of replicating" (Sallis 215). Poetic imagination is a bringing fourth, an allowing to be shown, a re-offering of the elemental. In many ways, it is the combining of elemental and tractive imagination within us that allows for something new to come fourth. It is not a production, but a permission. Poetic imagination is a kind of doubling whereby what is shown to sense perception and sense understanding is made to appear again in a new form, not a form that is rational or sheerly intelligible, not a form composed of individual parts or pieces. Rather this

doubled form channels through it all that is sensible without effacing it and without merely translating it. Poetic imagination exceeds, "it is not simply *as oneself* that one composes an artwork, but only through an excess of oneself, an excess that comes to be operative without ever becoming simply one's own, without ever being appropriated into one's ownness, to ones property" (Sallis 218). It is not production, not the stripping of the elemental or boxing it up to be used. It does not aim to merely produce but rather to allow something to shine fourth. What would it mean to approach problems faced by disabled people in this way? What would it mean to poetically imagine the conditions for shining fourth without recourse to producing a solution? Without a need to control and mine the elemental but instead a desire to channel it on its own terms?

This will be a monstrous project. One that requires us to embrace the uncertainty of nature, the force it has, the hovering of the image, it is a project and a mode of engagement that will require us to let go of all we think we know in order to approach things anew. This imagination is present in a way that has nothing to do with making and nothing to do with replicating something already seen but rather allowing the shining to show through. Rather than conceiving of a wheelchair as something that is made to replicate walking movement, it should be thought of as a creation that allows a disabled body to shine fourth. Instead of viewing shoes as a mere solution to a problem, we could view them as a poetic engagement that lets people cross brutal landscapes and become manifest within them. We ought not approach imagining futures of disability as futures where we have simply solved problems with tools. Rather, we ought to think about how we can channel what we know about our bodies, what we sense in nature and in ourselves, to create environments, spaces, objects, aids, that allow disabled people to shine from their own uniqueness into a world prepared to receive that image. My wheelchair

is not a mere solution to the problem that I can't walk, it is what allows me to appear, it opens me to new engagements with music and dance and spacing. I reject the notion that my chair is for one particular purpose, it is a paintbrush as much as it is my legs. It could be art as much as it is a tool.

"What artwork brings forth into manifestness is neither a being nor a general idea of beings but rather a moment of the expanse of self-showing with its elemental-horizonal configuration" (221). By this Sallis means that artworks do not generate something concrete or generalizable. They are particular and ephemeral. The wheelchair as a tool brings forth the general idea of a body that is unable, locks static notions of bodies into things that can and can not. A wheelchair as art makes manifest the expanse of self showing of a body that is uniquely elementally-horizonally configured. It is elementally configured by its unique relation to the natural world and its senses, it is horizontally configured by its appearance to others that is altered by the presence of a chair. Just as a painting can make visible a nearly imperceptible spread of light across the clouds, a wheelchair can make a nearly imperceptible tension between ability and inability. A blind person's cane hovers above the ground revealing a spacing that is otherwise taken for granted, a deaf person's sign makes visual the rhythm of speech. Poetically imagining disability allows for the way we navigate the world to be seen not as limiting or limited, but rather as something uniquely artful, uniquely capable of making beauty manifest. Moreover poetic imagination allows for creations that not only resolve material concerns for disabled people, but do so in a way that rather than concealing us behind terministic screens and false assumptions, frees us to appear as we are. Not as we ought to be, not in the name of palatability or conformation, but in the name simply being what we are. I do not need to try and replicate the experiences of dance or of sports or of nature that I once had, I am able to engage

my poetic imagination from where I now sit and prove just as forceful and beautiful as ever. In fact, my relation to the elemental, my relation to imagination, my relation to poetics has in many ways been freed by disability because of how obvious it becomes to disabled people that importance is placed on appearing, not on composition. Nature appears to me in the quiet stirring of my blood the way it did when I could hike mountains, but only now can I see it everywhere.

It is unsurprising then that if we want to engage disability poetically, via the poetic imagination, it once again follows that a poetic language is fitting. Idiom, idiomatic language and thinking, a thinking and a showing that allows for hovering and flexing and stirring and shifting, is uniquely prepared to let us poetically imagine disabled futures. Instead of first trying to define the category of disability, we can approach it as an idiom and move forward with our poetic and artistic configurations that would enable the thriving of disabled self showings. We don't need to understand all the chemical components of what makes a mountain in order to paint it in a way that shows us something important about its being. On the other hand, our painting will fail if we try to simply impose the mountain we think *should* be there on top of what is actually being shown. Poetic imagination because it is not a mere translation or copying has room for individualization, room for unique visions and particular styles, but it will also find itself deeply rooted in the self showing of the things that it seeks to engage which will allow those things to show themselves again and again. This is what we ought to aim for when engaging in a disability discourse. Poetic imagination can allow us to build futures not bound by the problematic languages or schemas that already dominate the present, instead it can open us to new modes of seeing those problems and new ways of representing what it is we see appearing around us.

IV. Conclusion

In the course of this thesis I have discussed the multitude of reasons that disability should not be taken as a fixed concept that can be understood through categorizing bodies and their functions. Nor should disability be conceived of by taking account of societal or environmental features and categorizing their functions and parts in contrast to bodies. Instead, Sallis's dual understanding of sense, the elemental, and the three distinct forms of imagination give us a multitude of ways to discuss physiological, social, and environmental elements of disability together in a way that is idiomatic. By understanding the way that we have misunderstood both sense perception and sense understanding, tractive imagination can allow us to recover a sense of sense that can free itself from the kinds of language that seek to overcode sensory experience in the name of intelligibility. By understanding the way that nature has been historically framed for extraction, elemental imagination can show us how to engage nature as a question of manifestness not as a question of composition. By understanding that language is capable of arising out of an appearance as something we channel to give an account for that appearance rather than something we wield over it, poetic imagination can allow us to employ idiom as a language that does not derive its meaning from divorced definition but rather from the occurrence of an appearance itself. Overall, Sallis's' account of the natural world and how we ought to engage it implicates disability not only as something of linguistic concern, but something that as an experience ought to be explored in relation to the natural world. The status quo prevents disabled experiences from yielding the full force of their insight to the rest of the world. What Sallis shows us is not only how to make this sharing of insight possible, but he clues us in to just how important that insight may be. As people who live their lives constituted by and constantly reminded of the force of the elemental, the subtle power of imagination, and the way

that rigid definitions fail. Disability has so much to offer the world but disputes about "what" disability "is" prevents that knowledge and insight from being shared.

It does not make sense to ask "what are disabled people disabled from?" or "what about an environment that is disabling?" These questions can only take us so far and always rely on a relationship to nature that assumes a need for extraction, production, and function that are already overcoded and determined by norms we have no control over. Instead, we can look at disability as something that appears and in its appearance we can interrogate and navigate its challenges but we can also gain insight into its beauty and advantages. In many ways while disabled people face struggles of normative operation, we are also freed from given assumptions about the world that cut people off from nature by making them take things like sense and imagination for granted.

Disabled people have unique needs, unique skills, unique insights and capacities for imagination. Those uniquenesses can not be addressed if we continue to work only from an interior sense of what disability is via accounts of those who live disabled lives nor can it be accounted for by individuals who view disability externally from a distance. In both cases, misconceptions about the nature of sense, their failure to see the image as a whole image not made up of parts but rather of gathered horizons that allow for showing, prevents any holistic sense of disability from appearing. Disability can not be understood as a mere sum of its parts, it is a unique appearance in the world. The word disability can not be understood definitionally though the prefix dis and the word ability. It can only be sensible idiomatically, as something that holds and bears meaning but is not reducible to external rigid definition. Our bodies age, they move, they change. Circumstances and bodies enable and disable, nature gathers in our favor and against it. What it means to cross over into a category or identity of disability is

something that can not be concretely tied down and yet has a force that impacts peoples real lives and survivals.

Idiomatic disability as a model allows us to resolve tensions between whether disability is a matter of internal bodies or external structures. It also allows us to avoid overcoding or excluding particular experiences from our accounts of disability while still demanding that we pay particular attention to the facets of disability's appearance. In this way, we can still maintain that there is a difference, something unique about those who are and show themselves to be disabled. We do not have to collapse the category into nothing or explode it into everything, but we avoid the problem of rigid exclusion that prevents particular experiences from being accounted for in our imaginations for the future. This new understanding can allow us to develop a language that will better allow disabled people to not only advocate for themselves and our needs but will also allow us to share our expertise and insight with the world.

Imagine being there, crippled and joyous. Imagine being there, doing a stand up comedy routine without a voice. Imagine being there, paralyzed but still dancing. Imagine being there, blind but still attuned to the image of the world. Imagine being there, sensing every muscle and tendon as it moves within you. Imagine being there, atop a mountain or in an office building, bathed in the elemental, capable of imagining something that would allow for a pure shining fourth. Imagine being there, in a world free to show itself as itself and not bound by a history and language that seeks to foreclose. Imagine.

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