

# S5

## PHENOMENOLOGY/AFFECT/CRITIQUE

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Understood broadly, phenomenology is the effort to characterize how phenomena manifest, how they appear, contrasted to a more empiricist or realist effort to determine the truth or falsehood of an already assumed real. While many post-structuralists critiqued phenomenology as remaining wedded to a substantialized notion of Subject, phenomenologists themselves often characterized their own thinking as an effort to escape the Cartesian divide and to understand phenomena outside of the subject/object constraints of consciousness. Since much of affect studies has traditionally been aligned with post-structuralist thinking in its philosophical formations, phenomenology early on seemed to be ignored, if not dismissed, as an approach to think the affective dimension.

This dismissal has shifted in the last few decades. What was once viewed as almost an impasse between critique and phenomenology has become more of a cross-fertilization of thought. In appeals for social justice and climate activism, critique needs a way to express why there should be a valuation of one politics over another, and some have looked to phenomenological thinkers to do so. And in phenomenology, particularly in feminist phenomenology, there has been an increasing focus on the need for critique of extant reality, along with a focus on how it is manifest. In the last few years, this ongoing reassessment of phenomenology has taken on the designation of *critical phenomenology* (see Weiss, Salamon, Murphy, editors, *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*; and contributors to *Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology*).

In the years since the publication of Gregg and Seigworth's *Affect Theory Reader* (2010), affect theory, too, continues to shift and morph its orientations and concerns. The essays in Seigworth and Pedwell, editors, *The Affect Theory Reader 2* (2023) express a full range of reassessments of both affect(s) and affect theory, a range the editors evoke through terms such as "provocations," "reinterpretations,"

“dishabitations,” “occlusions,” “omissions,” and “ossifications” (4). In conceptual parallel with critical phenomenology (which suggests not a negation of phenomenology but the ongoing need to translate earlier texts to new times, spaces, and practices), we might call this a *Reader in critical affect theory*.

This stream seeks the promises and threats posed by the confluences or divergences of critical phenomenology and critical affect theory. Submissions may pursue any thematic within this confluence or divergence. Some possibilities include:

- Affective interpretations of Merleau-Ponty’s notions of atmosphere, institutionality, expressivity, or dimension.
- Critical affective and phenomenological interpretations of intercorporeality. What hinders intercorporeality? How is intercorporeality felt (lived) as threat?
- What roles do specific institutions or specific social habits/practices play in promising, marshaling, threatening, or hindering particular affective modalities?
- What lived experiences of *disaffection* are crucial for us to think, deploy, or resist today? (e.g., Xine Yao and Simone de Beauvoir; Claudia Rankine and Frantz Fanon)
- Phenomenology and affect theory have each maintained ambivalent but productive relations with Marxian thought. How might critical affect theory and critical phenomenology contribute to newer folds in theorizing global capitalism, suggested by the recent and more desperate labels of, e.g., brutality (Mbembe), remaindered life (Tadiar), disaster capitalism (Klein).