PUNCTA
*Journal of Critical Phenomenology*

# INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

ADAM BLAIR
*Stony Brook University*

ANNE O'BYRNE
*Stony Brook University*

The Collegium Phaenomenologicum has met in Umbria, Italy every summer since 1976; only COVID made it pause, and hopefully only temporarily. It has been a forum for deep and broad discussion of the phenomenological tradition; it has also been a place where that tradition has itself been broadened and deepened by generations of thinkers who came to study the classical texts and to do phenomenology.[1] In 2019, over the course of three weeks in July, in three lecture courses, several talks by visiting faculty, twelve text seminars sessions, art workshops, and very many informal talks over dinner, on the terrace, and on long walks through the town of Città di Castello and beyond, the Collegium worked on the question of critical phenomenology.

Planning for the session on Critical Phenomenology began in the summer of 2016 and, in retrospect, it seems merely obvious that this should be the theme. The term had been appearing in monographs and journal articles, in graduate seminars and conference presentations, and in conversations here and there on the fringes of SPEP and other meetings. It had emerged in the conversations leading to the founding of this journal. It cropped up where researchers trained in the phenomenological tradition found themselves compelled to respond to phenomena that seemed far removed from the intentional objects that had featured as examples in the classical texts. Those exemplary lecterns and studies were never the most important thing, of course; they did their work as occasions for doing phenomenology, giving neophytes experience of how it was done and, along the way, equipping them with the skills needed for phenomenological practice. If the *logos* of the phenomenon is a method, then the choice of phenomenon would seem to be beside the point. A piece of furniture, a hand touching a hand, a mood, an instance of police violence—all could undergo the *epoché*, all could show themselves from themselves, and all could reveal transcendental structures. Why then describe some operations as *critical*? What would be the criteria for defining critical phenomenology?

[1] See http://www.collegiumphaenomenologicum.org

The compelling objects were sometimes the political—and aesthetic—things that the Critical Theory tradition dealt with in terms of the historical dialectic: instances of oppression, injustice, discrimination, and alienation. But concern with the same things did not mean that phenomenologists took on the term *critical* as an attempt at a rapprochement between the traditions, but nor was there any sense that this was some sort of turf war: consciousness for phenomenologists, class consciousness for Left Hegelians. The *critical* in *Critical Phenomenology* is not simply lifted from *Critical Theory*, and, though the two traditions have abutted and cut across one another since the beginning of the twentieth century, trying to define one in terms of the other did not move the conversation far.

Perhaps, more plausibly, the word arrived from the direction of Critical Race Theory, Critical Indigenous Studies, and other fields where the critical turn meant wielding the concepts and practices of the discipline for new purposes. But in those cases, it has been a central task to dismantle the discipline itself. Race Theory at least since Arthur de Gobineau served as the intellectual justification of white supremacy; indigenous or Native American studies was a means of extracting a museum-quality archive from living, traumatized communities. The first and most continuous object of study for Critical Race Theory must be Race Theory itself, and the question of the use, abuse, evolution, and emancipatory possibilities of the very thought of race. Yet phenomenology does not present this sort of crisis of inheritance—Martin Heidegger's Nazism notwithstanding. The method never did calcify into a discipline and, despite Edmund Husserl's hopes, it did not become a school. Specifically, it could never be a self-asserting theoretical position. If critical phenomenology re-purposes the phenomenological tradition, it is not in order to redeem it but to put it to work in worldly ways.

In that case, it has been around for a long time. Frantz Fanon described Black experience with world-changing force; Simone de Beauvoir's description of the life of a woman generated a new language of resistance, and a feminist mode of practicing phenomenology that has lead the way to today's critical practices. The plural is important. Some confine themselves to descriptions of first-person experience, in the classical mode. Others engage the testimony of others, or draw on the evidence of studies and artworks in a peri-phenomenological style. Some remain focused on the revelation of transcendental structures as the aim of phenomenological research, while others, wary of the power relations embedded in transcendental claims, think in terms of a quasi-transcendental move. Some turn to Maurice Merleau-Ponty for differentiated embodiment, others to Henri Bergson or Husserl for a practice of hesitation.

All of which upsets the project of definition, and shows the error of looking for definitive criteria. At Collegium 2019, the question "What is critical phenomenology?" was asked every day, but every day the conversation had changed. Some felt that we should abandon "phenomenology" altogether given its complicated relationship with eternal essences; the postcolonial turn of contemporary philosophy ought to make us suspicious of any potential for hegemonic thinking, and the project of finding some universal logos of phenomena was outdated and dangerous. Others were committed to phenomenology if it could remain critical, but argued that settling on a specific definition of critical phenomenology would be counterproductive, amounting to a dangerous sort of gate-keeping that would only limit

the possibilities of thinking-otherwise before it could even get off the ground. Still others were more keen to get to work *doing* critical phenomenology, breathing fresh life into the old concepts of the epoché and intentional arc to articulate some facet of marginalized bodily experience. Instead of attempting to define critical phenomenology, these thinkers reasoned, why don't we just *do* it? This was a fruitful path, but the same questions would inevitably resurface after discussions of the specific form of bodily life under examination: But is this *really* phenomenology? If this is phenomenology, what makes it immune to the universalizing gestures of "traditional" phenomenology? If this is not phenomenology, then what is it? Is this critical? And, if so, critical of what?

Many began to wonder if they even knew what phenomenology was. To this end, some proposed trying out the limits of phenomenological inquiry as a productive first step towards doing phenomenology critically. To begin this inquiry, some pushed traditional thinkers—Husserl, Jean-Paul Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger—to their extreme, using these thinkers' own theoretical claims to dissect their ill-considered examples and candid interviews. Others argued for pushing these thinkers aside altogether, letting the spotlight shine on thinkers often left outside the traditional canon, narrowly understood: Edith Stein, Fanon, Beauvoir, and others. At that point, the question of method would emerge again. Can one think critically with these thinkers who were embedded in a framework that had been laid out by men who circled around lecterns and writing desks as their emblematic experiences, freely assumed access to the experiences of colonized others, participated in dangerous political parties, and sought universal, transcendental essences? Mustn't we reflect upon the very foundation of phenomenological inquiry—and, in some cases, reject it entirely or rethink it from the ground up—in order to even read these thinkers fairly and critically? Positions shifted and changed, and we returned to the drawing board time and again, seeking different avenues to the question of what we were doing when we did critical phenomenology.

The lecture courses would drop bread crumbs along our path. In the first week's course, led by Peg Birmingham and focused on Hannah Arendt, political questions and issues of historical perspective came to the fore. Peg Birmingham prompted discussions on what it means to think and act politically, and how these political experiences form spaces, generate worlds, and carry us forward. In the second week, Alia Al-Saji pressed on the most common reading of Fanon, which places him within a Husserlian, or sometimes Merleau-Pontian, framework. We all saw Fanon as if for the first time, attempting to grapple with the richness of his thought and the affective force of his writing on its own terms instead of trying to tease it apart using familiar concepts. Finally, in the third week, Matthias Fritsch asked us to question the lineage of phenomenology, returning to basic questions of deconstruction and critique: is Jacques Derrida a phenomenologist? Does he perform a critical phenomenology using Heidegger's work, or is he critical *of* Heidegger's thinking?

The courses, lectures, seminars and long evenings philosophizing over dinner and wine produced an atmosphere buzzing with curiosity and debate. A moment came when, all at once, everyone had a passionate stance on what phenomenology is and how it might be critical, but everyone also felt compelled to continue to play with the ideas and question their most deeply-held assumptions. A matrix of different strategies and arguments began

to weave in the course of the shared conversation, one without discernible end or beginning. A few points of agreement held it to the ground and in common—that phenomenology can be fruitful endeavor and that phenomenology ought to look forward to a more inclusive future. But what this might look like, how it ought to be done, and whether or not it was already being done remained up for discussion. In true phenomenological fashion, it felt as though the conversation had to, time and again, start again from the beginning.

Perhaps the ultimate lesson, then, is that we ought *not* settle on or settle for a definitive, exhaustive criterion for critical phenomenology, though we also mustn't give up the search. We should remain vigilant in reflecting upon our thinking, not in order to police the borders of phenomenology to ensure it remains healthily critical (or, indeed, pure and immutable), but in order to maintain good thinking and fresh perspectives. If we never consider what we are doing and what to call it, we risk falling into familiar patterns of thought or unwittingly treading on another's familiar territory. Yet if we cling to our discipline's goal as to a creed, we foreclose new opportunities for thinking—thinking harder, thinking better. The tensions that arise around method, the discipline's history, and how to grasp one's own epistemological position are all productive tensions. As Arendt puts it, what is important is to keep thought in motion. Academic fields can ossify into dusty artifacts of university life, outmoded technologies of knowledge with overreaching assumptions and troublesome blind spots. Conversations like these—the ones carried out at the Collegium, the ones carried on in this volume, the ones between disciplines and between the academy and the wider world—are what ensure that the dust is not allowed to settle. We welcome you to engage the works of this volume, written by both faculty and students who worked to define critical phenomenology at the Collegium Phaenomenologicum in 2019, to continue this shared task of unsettling and building together.

**PUNCTA**
*Journal of Critical Phenomenology*

# SIX SENSES OF CRITIQUE FOR CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY

LISA GUENTHER
*Queen's University*

*There is a point where methods devour themselves. I would like to start there.*
– Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

What is the meaning of critique for critical phenomenology? Building on Gayle Salamon's engagement with this question in the inaugural issue of *Puncta: A Journal for Critical Phenomenology* (2018), I will propose a six-fold account of critique as: 1) the art of asking questions, moved by crisis; 2) a transcendental inquiry into the conditions of possibility for meaningful experience; 3) a quasi-transcendental, historically-grounded study of particular lifeworlds; 4) a (situated and interested) analysis of power; 5) the problematization of basic concepts and methods; and 6) a praxis of freedom that seeks not only to interpret the meaning of lived experience, but also to change the conditions under which horizons of possibility for meaning, action, and relationship are wrongfully limited or foreclosed.[1] While the first two dimensions of critique are alive and well in classical phenomenology, the others help to articulate what is distinctive about critical phenomenology.[2]

[1] Thanks to Thomas Abrams and Team Phenomenology (a reading group based at UCLA and the University of Virginia) for conversations that helped me to formulate these six senses of critique. This paper is also inspired by conversations at the Collegium Phaenomenologicum on Critical Phenomenology organized by Anne O'Byrne in July 2019, and by discussions in my graduate seminars on Critical Phenomenology at Vanderbilt (2017) and Queen's (2019). In particular, I would like to thank Mérédith Laferté-Coutu, Adam Schipper, Shiloh Whitney, and Noah Moss Brender for their input and feedback. Thanks also to the anonymous reviewers who raised many important issues and questions that I have barely touched upon here, but which I intend to take up in future writing.

[2] "Classical phenomenology" is an admittedly imperfect term. I don't think anyone would say of themselves, "I do classical phenomenology," nor would it be particularly helpful to draw up a list of classical and critical phenomenologists, as if these were two different schools of thought. And yet, I do think there is a significant difference between a practice of phenomenology that explicitly engages in social critique—let's call this critical phenomenology—and a practice of phenomenology that does not. I have opted to call the latter classical phenomenology, not to suggest that such an approach is uncritical—as I will argue, there are multiple senses of critique at work in both classical and critical phenomenology—but rather to reflect in an open-ended way on the senses of critique that I see operative both in the emerging sub-field of critical phenomenology and in work throughout the phenomenological tradition that engages in some form of social critique.

As an initial formulation, we could understand critical phenomenology as a practice of suspending hegemonic "common sense" accounts of reality in order to reflect on the conditions of lived experience and the lifeworld in which it unfolds. It then describes, interrogates, and ultimately transforms the contingent, historical, yet quasi-transcendental structures that shape the meaning and materiality of this experience. I will say more about quasi-transcendental structures below, but some examples include colonialism, anti-Black racism, and heteropatriarchy. These structures are contingent in the sense that they have emerged through historical struggles, the outcome of which could have been—and could still become—otherwise. But they function in a quasi-transcendental way insofar as they generate and consolidate meaning by normalizing some habits of perception, cognition, and comportment while pathologizing others. In other words, they are not just phenomena in the world, but also (inter)subjective ways of seeing, hearing, moving, relating, and sense-making.[3]

The main difference between classical and critical phenomenology turns on a methodological and ethical commitment to attend to the ways that power and history shape lived experience. As Salamon (2018) puts it, "if phenomenology offers us unparalleled means to describe what we see with utmost precision, to illuminate what is true, critique insists that we also attend to the power that is always conditioning that truth" (15). The critical suspension of hegemonic norms is akin to the *epochē* in classical phenomenology, which brackets or suspends the natural attitude. But the challenge of bracketing quasi-transcendental assumptions like white supremacy or heteropatriarchy is different from the challenge of bracketing more abstract ontological and epistemic norms, such as the assumption that a perceptual object like a table exists apart from me, prior to the noetic acts that constitute its meaning. This difference is not just a matter of relative abstraction or concreteness; it has both methodological and substantive theoretical implications. First, it is by no means clear that we can simply "bracket" white supremacy or "put it out of play" in order to reflect on the way it shapes our lived experience and our lifeworld. As long as the historical, material, social world is structured by white supremacy, consciousness—including its perceptual practices, its ways of remembering and imagining, its encounters with alterity and feelings of empathy (or lack thereof), its kinaesthetic experiences, embodied habits, and ways of moving through the world—remains immersed in the very structures that one

[3] A full account of the quasi-transcendental is beyond the scope of this paper, but my use of this term is closer to Sartre's (2004) practico-inert—understood as a structure that is contingently established through praxis, but then comes to function as a generative matrix for further praxis—than it is to Derrida's account of the quasi-transcendental as a condition of possibility that is, at the same time, a condition of impossibility. Sina Kramer (2014) defines Derrida's quasi-transcendental as "the moment in which the entirety of the system falters, which is nevertheless necessary to its very operation" (522). This logic of "constitutive exclusion" is internal to the structures I have named as examples of the quasi-transcendental; for example, heteropatriarchy depends for its coherence on the constitutive exclusion of a queer/femme Other, who in turn haunts the system as a trace that can never be fully expunged. This is a helpful concept for critical phenomenology, but my own use of the term quasi-transcendental in this paper could be understood more simply as a condition for possibility that is contingently established—that could have been otherwise—but which comes to function *as if* it were necessary and inevitable. In this sense, it is very close to the concept of the historical a priori discussed below.

attempts to suspend, both to describe how they work and to interrogate them, ultimately intervening to transform or abolish oppressive structures.

Phenomenologists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) raised the possibility that even the classical *epochē* and reduction was a process that could never be completed once and for all (xii-xvi). Yet, the stakes of bracketing the assumption that the world exists apart from consciousness (in classical phenomenology) and bracketing the complex matrix of assumptions built into white supremacy, including its intersections with colonialism, capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and ableism (in critical phenomenology), are different in scale and complexity. Whether they are different enough to warrant regarding critical phenomenology as post-phenomenological hinges on one's understanding of structures like white supremacy as quasi-transcendental, and therefore generative of meaning rather than simply phenomena in the world to be studied empirically. Furthermore, the challenge of bracketing white supremacy, even just methodologically in order to "think what we are doing" (Arendt 1958, 5), will be different depending on how one is situated in relation to this structure. A white person who benefits materially from white supremacy will have to undertake a different kind of work to describe, map, and critically interrogate it than a person of color whose life chances are systematically attacked or undermined by white supremacy. To put this in more explicitly phenomenological terms: the way into the *epochē* will be different depending on how one is situated in the lifeworld.

The second important methodological difference between classical and critical phenomenology concerns the relation between description, normativity, and action. In classical phenomenology, the point of the transcendental reduction is to discover and systematize *a priori* conditions for the possibility of a meaningful experience, such as the correlation between *noesis* and *noema*. The possibility of questioning the normative status of these correlations or intervening to change them does not arise because it simply does not make sense to change *a priori* structures. It would be as strange to question the ethical or political status of the Kantian categories; they are not right or wrong, they just are. But one cannot adequately describe and map the quasi-transcendental structure of white supremacy without engaging in a normative critique of its impact on the world, embodied consciousness, and Being-with Others or Being-for Others. And once one begins to interrogate the ethical and political dimensions of white supremacy, it is not enough merely to describe it and denounce it as harmful or unjust; critique calls for collective action to transform structures that normalize, naturalize, and support the possibilities of some subjects while pathologizing, marginalizing, and undermining the possibilities of others. While not every attempt at critical phenomenology will manage to intervene and transform the structures that it describes and interrogates, an ethical orientation towards practices of freedom is crucial to the method, and not simply added on later as an "application" of philosophical analysis to the "real" world.

Again, classical phenomenology would not think of intervening into the transcendental structures of consciousness or even the lifeworld, even when Husserl (1970) announces a crisis in the European sciences. The point is not to transform the structures of the lifeworld, but rather to make the empirical sciences more accountable to the lifeworld, and to guide them back to a transcendental foundation in phenomenology. Critical phenomenology has

different aspirations, and so it needs different methods. We must both rethink the purpose and practice of methods, such as the transcendental and eidetic reductions, and also engage with non-phenomenological critical methods to trace the contingent, historical emergence of structures like white supremacy and heteropatriarchy, to ask whether and how these structures could be otherwise, to experiment with different modes of transformative praxis to (re)open horizons of possibility, and to reclaim, create, and support more liberatory ways of being, relating, and sense-making.

It follows from these first two points that critical phenomenology is a hybrid method; it needs tools, concepts, and practices beyond classical phenomenology to engage with history and power in its specificity, whether these methods come from postcolonial theory, feminism, critical race theory, Marxism, the Frankfurt school, psychoanalysis, queer theory, Foucaultian genealogy, deconstruction, critical disability studies, or some other critical discourse. As such, critical phenomenology is not a science and does not aspire to become one; it a pluralistic and open-ended practice, a way of thinking, doing, and paying attention that seeks to (re)open and support multiple horizons of possibility.

What, then, does critique mean for this hybrid critical practice of phenomenology? While the following list is not comprehensive, it covers a range of different meanings, some of which are shared by classical phenomenology, and some by other critical methodologies. The most important point running through this discussion is that critique is more than just an analytical method for pointing out what is wrong or problematic; it is also a creative, generative practice of experimenting with ways of addressing what is wrong without assuming that it can simply be made "right," but still aspiring to make it less wrong, less harmful, less oppressive.

## I. CRITIQUE AS THE ART OF QUESTIONING, MOVED BY CRISIS

At the heart of critique is a capacity and willingness to question what might otherwise seem unquestionable, whether because it appears true, necessary, and foundational, or because it seems too irrelevant, marginal, or inconsequential to warrant further inquiry. One might be moved to ask questions by idle curiosity, by a desire for systematic completeness, or by stubborn contrariness.[4] But one might also be moved by a situation that demands one's attention, whether because it disrupts one's expectations or because the expectations that it normalizes are intolerable. Critical phenomenology is situational in this latter sense; it goes beyond the activity of questioning, doubting, or becoming skeptical about something for its own sake. It is not the devil's advocate. Critical phenomenology has skin in the game, which is not to say that it only springs up in times of emergency, but rather that it is attuned to the relation between lived experience and the stuff of life: the materiality of the world from which we live, the relationships that support or undermine our flourishing, the

[4] By "idle" curiosity, I mean curiosity as a form of voyeuristic entertainment, in contrast with the rich accounts of curiosity by Perry Zurn (2021) and others for whom curiosity is very close to the sense of critical attention that I articulate here.

infrastructure that distributes life chances equitably or inequitably.

In this sense, a critical practice of phenomenology remains rooted in the ancient Greek sense of *kritikē tekhnē* as the art of making distinctions to address a legal or political conflict, and also the medieval Latin sense of *crisis* as a medical situation calling for diagnosis and intervention. As Wendy Brown (2005) explains, *kritikē tekhnē* involved "recognizing an objective crisis and convening subjective critics who then passed a critical judgment and provided a formula for restorative action" (5). For the ancient Greeks, the art of critique was not only to clarify what is wrong in a situation, but also to undertake thought and action "to sort, sift, and set the times to rights" (6). In this sense, critique is not only a negative or analytical practice, it is also a (re)constructive intervention to "stave off catastrophe" and to find a path towards repair (7).

Two points are especially important here for my account of critical phenomenology: first, the situation of being *moved to think* by a concrete situation or problem—a "crisis," both in the sense of a punctual, disruptive event and also in the sense of ongoing, structural forms of injustice or harm—and secondly, the orientation towards creative, reparative action, beyond the clarification and diagnosis of problems. This practice of situated, motivated, and creative questioning is more interested in responses and response-ability than in definitive answers or solutions. As such, its aim is not to put an issue to rest, but rather to (re)open horizons of indeterminacy, possibility, and becoming-otherwise. This includes rigorous forms of attention to joy and delight that immerse themselves in phenomena without needing to know whether or how this joy can be justified.

## II. CRITIQUE AS TRANSCENDENTAL INQUIRY

At the heart of modern European philosophy, including classical phenomenology, is an understanding of critique as a systematic inquiry to clarify concepts and to establish the limits of these concepts and their application, in resistance to dogmatism. As Kant (2008) writes in the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

> We deal with a concept dogmatically . . . if we consider it as contained under another concept of the object which constitutes a principle of reason and determine it in conformity with this. But we deal with it merely critically if we consider it only in reference to our cognitive faculties and consequently to the subjective conditions of thinking it, without undertaking to decide anything about its object. (243)

In this sense, critique involves a shift of attention from the object to the subject, and from the empirical to the transcendental; it is a form of transcendental inquiry that reflects on the (subjective) conditions for the possibility of a thought or perception.

The phenomenological method developed by Edmund Husserl and refined by many others including Eugen Fink, Edith Stein, Maurice Halbwachs, and Alfred Schutz, is critical in this sense. The natural attitude is a site of unquestioned, pre-reflective dogmatism that

must be bracketed through the *epochē* and led back to its transcendental conditions through a series of reductions to discover, clarify, and systematize the underlying structures of intentionality that make possible the meaningful appearance of a world to consciousness. As such, the phenomenological method cuts through the dogmatism of psychologism, positivism, and abstract rationalism, opening up a middle path that is both theoretically systematic and also grounded in lived experience. This understanding of critique is necessary but insufficient for critical phenomenology, as I hope will become clear in the sections that follow.

## III. CRITIQUE AS THE HISTORICALLY-GROUNDED, QUASI-TRANSCENDENTAL STUDY OF PARTICULAR LIFEWORLDS

In addition to a transcendental inquiry into the conditions for the possibility of any world whatsoever, some phenomenologists have made historically-grounded inquiries into particular lifeworlds, as well as particular ways of being situated in these lifeworlds. In *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl (1970) defines the lifeworld as the pre-given, pre-reflective context of everyday experience that grounds the meaning of basic concepts upon which empirical sciences rely, but which they cannot fully understand without the transcendental science of phenomenology (121-48). Husserl acknowledges the importance of history as "the vital movement of the coexistence and the interweaving of original formations and sedimentations of meaning," and he argues that the conclusions of "factual history" remain naïve to the extent that they ignore "the general ground of meaning upon which all such conclusions rest" and "the immense structural a priori which is proper to it" (371). This acknowledgement of historicity opens the possibility of a phenomenological study of the *historical a priori* "which encompasses everything that exists as historical becoming and having-become or exists in its essential being as tradition and handing-down" (372). But the radical potential of this account is abruptly limited by Husserl's commitment to a teleological view of history in which "all historical facticities, all historical surrounding worlds, peoples, times, civilizations" are ultimately whittled down to their essences in order to demonstrate, within the "*aeterna veritas*" of phenomenology as a transcendental science, that "the same reason… functions in every man, the animal rationale, no matter how primitive [*sic*] he is" (377-78).

A more promising approach to the historical *a priori* emerges in Michel Foucault's account of the contingent historical structures that nevertheless operate as a "grid" of intelligibility, shaping the production and circulation of statements that function as a basis for truth claims. Foucault (1972) writes:

> Juxtaposed, these two words [historical apriori] produce a rather startling effect; what I mean by the term is an *a priori* that is not a condition of validity for judgements, but a condition of reality for statements. It is not a question of rediscovering what might legitimize an assertion, but of freeing the conditions of emergence of statements, the law of their coexistence with others, the specific

> form of their mode of being, the principles according to which they survive, become transformed, and disappear. (127)

James Dodd (2016) explains the relation, but also the difference, between the historical a priori in Husserl and Foucault in terms of the archive:

> Foucault's notion of the archive can be thought of as marking that gap or break of separation that binds but at the same time holds us apart from the past, and in this sense its analysis shares something with what Husserl describes as the zigzag of historical reflection. But here it is the break and not the continuity with the past, the manner in which past discursive practices are no longer "our own" as opposed to inescapably ours, that is revealed as the space in which the archive appears. (34)

This difference between Husserlian and Foucaultian approaches to the historical *a priori* is decisive for critical phenomenology.[5] While classical phenomenology may aspire to become a science of essences built on transcendental reflection and eidetic variation, critical phenomenology needs an archive. It is not just anyone's reflection on anything, it is *someone's* reflection on a particular situation that they did not create single-handedly, but in which they are implicated. Precisely because an historical situation is more complex than the first-person experience of any given consciousness, we need more than our own perspective to make sense of it. Critical phenomenology moves beyond the centrality of first-person experience in classical phenomenology, although it does not leave it behind; rather, it engages with third-person accounts and second-person encounters, both to broaden its understanding of the situation and to deepen its sense of the quasi-transcendental structures at work in its own first-person experience.

Individual introspection is not enough to pick out the quasi-transcendental historical structures that shape one's own lived experience. In addition to the transcendental reduction that begins with a reduction to ownness, critical phenomenology needs a method of what Sartre (2004) calls "regressive" analysis (39). This analysis may begin with first-person experience, but also takes its cue from an archive of statements, events, and expressions that are not directly accessible in the first-person, but only through the mediation of language, writing, images, documents, artifacts, and so forth. In studying this archive, the critical phenomenologist is not just studying "the world" as opposed to their "own" experience;

[5] Foucault's own relation to phenomenology is notoriously hostile. In claiming that critical phenomenology needs an archive, I do not mean to imply that Foucault himself was a secret phenomenologist, or even that he would approve of the connections I am making between critical phenomenology and Foucault's own methods of archeology, genealogy, and problematization. My claim is not that these methods are actually phenomenological, but that a critical practice of phenomenology needs to engage with critical methods beyond its own transcendental and eidetic methods. For a more detailed discussion of Foucault, phenomenology, and the historical *a priori*, see Koopman (2010, 2012) as well as the special issue of *Continental Philosophy Review* on the Historical *A Priori* in Husserl and Foucault, edited by Andreea Smaranda Aldea and Amy Allen (2016).

they are studying the world *in which* they exist as (historical) Being-in-the-world. In other words, they are studying the sedimented structures of a situation that they inhabit, but which they cannot access through personal memory or perception alone.

This is precisely the form of study that phenomenologists such as Simone de Beauvoir, Frantz Fanon, Sartre, and others undertake in their critical phenomenologies of patriarchy, racism, colonialism, and capitalism.[6] What makes these inquiries quasi-transcendental rather than empirical—although there is also a great deal of empirical research in *The Second Sex* and other works—is the elaboration of the phenomenological method not only to bracket the natural attitude and uncover apodictic transcendental structures, but also to bracket specific aspects of the natural attitude—sexism, racism, colonialism, classism—to follow the traces of these contingent, historical structures in the world, in the habits of embodied consciousness, and in the many correlations between them.

Already, we should note a certain complication of some basic concepts of phenomenology, such as Husserl's repeated claim that the singular transcendental ego is prior to transcendental intersubjectivity, or his claim that consciousness constitutes the world without reciprocity. While a detailed discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of the current paper, I don't think we can get a critical phenomenology off the ground without affirming that transcendental subjectivity and intersubjectivity are equiprimordial, and that the world—not merely in the sense of a material universe, but also in the phenomenological sense of the broadest possible horizon for meaning—shapes the habits of embodied consciousness, even if the meaning of world *as such* is inconceivable without consciousness.

To elaborate this claim more concretely: a critical phenomenology of patriarchy is still a phenomenological inquiry, even though patriarchy itself is a contingent, historical phenomenon that manifests differently in different times and places, insofar as it attends both to patriarchal phenomena—i.e., to particular ways that patriarchy shows itself in the world, for example in institutions, laws, literary and philosophical works, etc.—and to patriarchal forms of consciousness, including patriarchal ways of perceiving, feeling, imagining, acting, moving, and relating to others. One could conduct an ethnographic or auto-ethnographic study of the subjective experience of patriarchy that does not rise to the level of critical phenomenology, even if it does follow a "phenomenological" research method of conducting interviews that ask participants to describe how they feel about x or how they experience x-y-z. What makes an inquiry *critical phenomenology* is, in my view, a quasi-transcendental analysis of how such experiences are possible, how such a (life)world is possible—not just "what is it like" but also how it got this way, and what would it take to transform the situation. Foucault (1988) makes a similar point in a late interview: "A critique

[6] Martin Heidegger also attempted a disastrous, proto-fascist, and anti-Semitic critique of a particular lifeworld, which he interpreted as the decadence of European and American democracies. There is nothing in the first three senses of critique to resist the violent appropriation of intellectual traditions and philosophical methods to (re)inforce some forms of dogmatism in the name of defeating others. This is why we need a more robust sense of the normative orientation of critical phenomenology to distinguish between liberatory and oppressive practices. Such a critique begins—but does not end—with a close, careful inquiry into particular lifeworlds.

is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest" (154-55, cited in Zigon 2018, 159). Foucault's genealogical method is one way of undertaking such a critique, which is distinct from phenomenology but not incompatible with it.[7]

In order to undertake an historically-grounded, quasi-transcendental critique of a particular lifeworld, one must grasp social structures like patriarchy or white supremacy as both *constituted* and *constitutive*: both constructed and upheld by particular relations of power, and also generative of thoughts, perceptions, and actions that tend to naturalize and normalize those power relations. When we practice phenomenology in this way, we are still attentive to the correlations between consciousness and world, but we do not restrict ourselves to universal, apodictic correlations. How, then, do we develop appropriate methods for this kind of work? For this, we must look beyond classical phenomenology without losing touch with it.

## IV. CRITIQUE AS (SITUATED AND INTERESTED) ANALYSIS OF POWER

In addition to 1) the art of asking questions in response to a crisis, 2) a transcendental inquiry into *a priori* conditions of possibility, and 3) a quasi-transcendental study of the historical *a priori* that shapes particular lifeworlds, there are many schools of thought that practice critique as a study of social power. We could call these approaches *critical theory*, without prioritizing the Frankfurt School or any other approach that designates itself in this way. Critical theory identifies a form of injustice, oppression, domination, exploitation, or extraction, and breaks it down, analyzing how it works. This is not generally understood as a transcendental or even quasi-transcendental inquiry; more often than not, it takes the form of an historical materialist inquiry into the social and political conditions of injustice in specific situations.

Iris Marion Young (2010) defines critical theory as "a normative reflection that is historically and socially contextualized. . . . Normative reflection must begin from historically specific circumstances because there is nothing but what is, *the given, the situated interest in justice*, from which to start" (5, emphasis added). This account of critical theory resonates with the phenomenological commitment to beginning with the given, but it also contrasts sharply with Husserl's insistence on the *disinterestedness* of the phenomenologist (for example, in Husserl 2010, 110, 174-5, 241). Husserl's approach to phenomenology includes an arguably normative reflection on the value of freedom, but his understanding of freedom is negative and methodological; it entails freedom *from* the sort of interests that, in his view, would interfere with the methodological neutrality required for the project of constructing a universal science of essences. The emerging field of critical phenomenology

[7] See Oksala (2016) for an example of scholarship that brings these methodologies together in productive ways.

does not share these universalist aspirations, nor the teleological view of history upon which they are founded. This does not mean that critical phenomenology is "biased," or that it slips back into a dogmatic adherence to a specific set of assumptions or principles. Critical phenomenology is committed to a sense of freedom that is more substantive than methodological neutrality, but whose specific content or meaning remains open to indeterminate horizons of possibility.

To the extent that critique is situated or contextual, such that one is moved to think critically by a particular relation to the given and to a history in which one is implicated, critical phenomenology is a practice of *immanent critique*. There is no outside to capitalism, heteropatriarchy, or colonialism from which to critique these structures and forces from a distance; rather, we must diagnose, resist, and unbuild them from within. As Karl Marx writes, "critique must comprehend itself as a moment within the situation which it is seeking to supercede" (cited in Allen 2016, 43). The immanent character of critique calls for the kind of epistemic courage and humility that Amy Allen calls "openness to unlearning," which is "properly understood not as a rejection of the reflexivity afforded to us by the epistemic and normative resources of modernity, but rather as a further elaboration of it" (31). This suggests that critique is not just a negative practice of pointing out what is oppressive or wrong, but also an openness to transformation, where action is understood not as a post-critical application of theory, but a further elaboration *of* critique.

One might well ask: what does phenomenology bring to critical theory that is not already alive and well in other critical methods? In other words, why practice critical *phenomenology* when one could undertake critical theory in many other ways without having to deal with the transcendental baggage of a tradition that has centred the first-person experience of a putatively unmarked, de-contextualized, and de-historicized "consciousness"? Wouldn't it be more critical just to leave phenomenology behind?

While I appreciate these questions and affirm a multiplicity of different critical methodologies, I remain committed to critical phenomenology because it offers a rich and insightful method for paying rigorous attention to lived experience in relation to social structures and in the context of an archive, without reducing the alterity, singularity, and complex relationality of experience to these structures. Phenomenology's affirmation of the inexhaustible horizons of meaning in any given experience holds open the possibility of unlearning and transforming sedimented habits of thought and being. It anchors this possibility in the horizon, not just as a methodological assumption but as a transcendental structure shaped in particular ways by quasi-transcendental relations of power. Building from this transcendental foundation, and (un)learning from other methodologies, critical phenomenology has grounds to claim that freedom is not just contingently preferable to oppression, it is an *a priori* good. But it also has the subtlety and complexity to explore the *meaning* of freedom in different contexts and situations.

For example, Beauvoir's (1964) critical phenomenology of oppression shows that the meaning of freedom is not limited to rights or capacities but rather unfolds in relation to *time*, understood in terms of an indeterminate horizon of possibility, the relation to an open future (60-61). Freedom is both an existential structure for Beauvoir and also a concrete

site of political struggle. The existential concept of freedom helps to resist overly reductive accounts of oppression that would seem to foreclose any possibility of resistance, given the relentlessness of the structures and systems designed to curtail or destroy freedom. But the attention to particular situations where freedom and oppression are at stake, and where the antinomies of action make it difficult or impossible to know the right thing to do, keep this transcendental orientation towards freedom grounded in the complexity of situations where its specific meaning remains open to interpretation and experimentation.

Other path-breaking examples of critical phenomenology that engage in critique as a situated and interested analysis of power include Young's (1990) phenomenology of feminine embodiment, Lewis Gordon's (2006) critique of anti-Black racism as bad faith (1995), Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenology, and Salamon's (2010) phenomenology of trans embodiment.

## V. CRITIQUE AS PROBLEMATIZATION

Problematization is the practice of articulating and questioning the assumptions that motivate one's "situated interest in justice." While this might not sound very different from the first sense of critique as questioning, it's important to distinguish between the art of asking questions and the practice of problematizing the very terms with which one formulates a question. Heidegger asked plenty of questions, but he did not problematize his situation as a German in a fascist, anti-Semitic, white supremacist state.

Problematization includes the critical disciplinary practice of re-thinking one's own key terms, for example by not taking for granted the meaning of race in critical race studies, or not assuming the meaning of disability in critical disability studies. Gayle Salamon (2018) writes that critical phenomenology:

> reflects on the structural conditions of its own emergence, and in this it is following an imperative that is both critical in its reflexivity and phenomenological in its taking-up of the imperative to describe what it sees in order to see it anew. In this, what is critical about critical phenomenology turns out to have been there all along. (12)

Similarly, anthropologist Cheryl Mattingly (2019) distinguishes between critical phenomenology 1.0, which she defines as applied phenomenology or "approaches that bring together critical sociopolitical voices and scholarly traditions with phenomenological ones" (416), and critical phenomenology 2.0, which she understands as "a radical provocation to disquiet dominant sociopolitical concepts, including those we ourselves hold" (417).[8] In

[8] See also the work of anthropologist Robert Desjarlais (2005), for whom critical phenomenology "attends at once to the concerns and lifeworlds of [our ethnographic subjects] and to the interrelated social, discursive, and political forces that underpinned those concerns and lifeworlds" (369). For Desjarlais, critical phenomenology makes "a plea for experimentation and difference in future research into the subjective worlds of those suffering from distress" (370).

other words, critical phenomenology 2.0 problematizes its own basic concepts in a reflective (or maybe even hyper-reflective or meta-reflective) way, as a practice of phenomenology that unfolds not merely alongside but *through* ethnography.[9]

In his later work, Foucault (1994a) defines problematization as a practice that:

> . . . develops the conditions in which possible responses can be given; it defines the elements that will constitute what the different solutions attempt to respond to. This development of a given into a question, this transformation of a group of obstacles and difficulties into problems to which the diverse solutions will attempt to produce a response, this is what constitutes the point of problematization and the specific work of thought. (118)

Erinn Gilson (2014) clarifies: "Our response, then, is not to the problem as a dilemma but to the conditions of its emergence, its problematic structure" (88). This point is key for any critical practice of phenomenology, and it helps to clarify what is at stake in a quasi-transcendental study of particular lifeworlds with a situated interest in power. For example, one could approach the problem of mass incarceration as a dilemma to be solved through sentencing reform, legislative change, or even by releasing people from prison and eventually closing down prisons. But these ways of "solving" the dilemma of mass incarceration would not, in themselves, address the conditions of the problem's emergence, and they may actually exacerbate the problem by inscribing carceral logics more deeply, for example by expanding non-custodial forms of surveillance and disciplinary control. In order to problematize mass incarceration, one must not only grasp how it is "wrong" and try to make it "right," one must trace the contingent, yet constitutive structures that normalize the conflation of accountability with punishment – and in order to do this, one must situate oneself in relation to networks of carceral power that promise security and prosperity to some, while exposing others to containment, control, and state violence.

In a sense, problematization is questioning 2.0; it has a reflexive structure that takes even its own most compelling responses as problems for further thought. As such, problematization opens endless horizons of possibility, not in a way that stalls or forecloses action but for the sake of resisting co-optation by hegemonic power. To continue the example of mass incarceration, problematization allows us to grasp prison abolition not as the finite project of shutting down correctional institutions, but rather as an open ethical horizon of possibility that seeks to dismantle the carceral, capitalist, colonial, patriarchal, white supremacist logics that form the prison state's conditions of emergence. In the words of Fred Moten and Stefano Harney (2004), the point is "[n]ot so much the abolition of prisons but the abolition of a society that could have prisons" (114).

[9] Ultimately, the practice of problematization must also extend to critique itself. For an abolitionist problematization of critique, see Boggs et al (2019, 27-28).

Even though problematization is an open-ended process, it does not devolve into an endless reflection on the problem with solutions, which in turn become problems, and so on, and so on, ad infinitum. This is because problematization also does the creative or generative work of assembling a community of thought and action—an emergent "we"—to respond to problems without assuming that a definitive solution is possible. Foucault (1994a) argues that it is

> necessary to make the future formation of a "we" possible by elaborating the question. Because it seems to me that the 'we' must not be previous to the question; it can only be the result—and the necessarily temporary result—of the question as it is posed in the new terms in which one formulates it . . . [This is a matter of] seeing if it were possible to establish a "we" on the basis of the work that had been done, a "we" that would also be likely to form a community of action. (114-15)

This invocation of a community of action brings us to the sixth and final sense of critique as a praxis of freedom.

## VI. CRITIQUE AS A PRAXIS OF FREEDOM

This final sense of critique is also the most important for critical phenomenology. I understand praxis not only in a general sense as the embodied and/or collective practices through which one makes sense of the world, but also in a more specific sense rooted in community organizing as the relation between theory, action, and reflection that is explicitly oriented towards resistance, resurgence, emancipation, liberation, or some other way of trying to get (a little more) free.

In the *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx (1975) defines praxis as *sinnlich-menschliche Tätigkeit* or "sensuous human activity," which Frederic Jameson interprets as "a material, or materialist, action involving change" (Sartre 2004, xix). Sartre builds on this Marxist account in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, defining praxis as human activity that alters the material-historical context in which it unfolds by producing structures with enough stability to constitute a new sense of social and historical reality (53-64). Sartre calls this reality the *practico-inert*; it is the material-historical field out of which praxis arises and which it seeks to perpetuate and/or transform (67, 71-74). Each configuration of the practico-inert has its own sedimented objects, patterns and norms that limit and shape the possibilities for action without fully determining them (162-66). Part of the work of critique is to track the interplay of praxis and the practico-inert, identifying counter-finalities that constrain or block the horizon of possibility for further action (124, 183).

With this critical phenomenology of praxis, Sartre (2004) reminds us that *we make the road by walking*: "Through experimentation, as through any other form of activity, human action posits and imposes its own possibility" (19). While a Marxist critique begins with the means and modes of production and pursues the contradictions internal to this material-historical

context, Sartre's critical phenomenology "set[s] out from the immediate, that is to say from the individual fulfilling himself in his abstract praxis, so as to rediscover, through deeper and deeper conditionings . . . historical man" (52). In other words, critique unfolds as an investigation of the historical depth and texture and structure of my own experience, which becomes accessible to me through a *regressive* investigation of leading-back to the material conditions of this experience, but also (ultimately) also a *progressive* movement of cultivating new forms of praxis. For Sartre, praxis is not just the creation of a new and unanticipated future through a critical engagement with the past; it is also "a movement from the future (for example, the machine in working order) towards the past: repairing something means grasping its integrity both as a temporal abstract and as the future state which is to be reconstituted" (61). In this sense, critical praxis is not just an analytical process of pointing out, breaking down, and clarifying what is dogmatic, unjust, or problematic, but also a creative practice of (re)claiming, (re)building and experimenting with alternative ways of Being-in-the-world and Being-with others, supported by more life-giving frameworks for thought, action, and existence.

This creative or generative work of critique ranges from the relatively modest goal of cultivating "the art of not being governed quite so much," as Foucault (2001) defines critique in his later work (193), to a radical "restructuring of the world," as Fanon (1986) announces in *Black Skin, White Masks* (60). Restructuring the world is not a metaphor; it is a revolutionary practice with material conditions and effects. But revolutions don't happen unless people also come to perceive, remember, and imagine the world differently. In his essay, "This is the Voice of Algeria," Fanon (1965) shows how a sense of national consciousness emerged among people in remote villages who gathered around radios to listen through static and signal disruptions to Radio Free Algeria, collectively interpreting the meaning of broadcasts from the front and holding open the possibility of another world beyond colonial domination. This collective act of problematizing and interpreting colonial power "brings about essential mutations in the consciousness of the colonized, in the manner in which he perceives the colonizer, in his human status in the world" (53). But it also has material effects: "Listening in on the Revolution, the Algerian existed with it, *made it exist*" (93, emphasis added). In an extraordinary turn of phrase, Fanon calls this "a radical transformation of the *means of perception*, of the very world of perception" (96, emphasis added). Revolutionary praxis must not only seize control of the means of production, but also transform the means of perception that (re)produces meaning in and through materiality.

The desire to restructure the world might sound naïve or utopian if we limit our revolutionary imagination to a sudden, instantaneous change on a planetary scale. But if we understand the meaning of *world* phenomenologically, as an open-ended context for meaningful experience with nested levels of intimacy and strangeness that sometimes overlap and sometimes conflict or crash against each other, then we must admit that the structure of the world is quite open to change – sometimes frighteningly so. The collective practice of restructuring the world need not extend to a global scale in order to matter. It might turn on very basic questions like, "Can I live?" (Hartman 2019, 10). What would it take to get your knee off his throat? How can we help each other breathe?

As a generative context for meaning and for happening, world is both an epistemic and an ontological concept. It is not an entity or a collection of entities; it is also not a container for entities. Rather, world is a matrix of relations and a horizon of possibilities. In his critical hermeneutics of worldbuilding, Jarrett Zigon (2018) understands political action as a practice of "moving into the clearings—the sites of potentialities—that emerge in the interstices of [for example] the drug war situation. Once there, in the clearings, we can begin to experiment with new political-moral concepts that may hold up to the burden of a worldly political demand" (101). For Zigon, "[a] critical hermeneutics cannot simply tear down and destroy; it cannot simply unground. It must also create by disclosing the openings that are already there" (159). He calls this "a critical hermeneutics of what *can be* as a practice of the not-yet" (160) and "an ethics for becoming otherwise" (161). Like the open-ended processes of problematization, praxis is not necessarily—perhaps not ever—a matter of finding "solutions," but rather of (re)opening, expanding, and amplifying horizons of possibility that might have otherwise seemed closed or nonexistent.

## COMMON THREADS

At the heart of these different senses of critique is the (re)opening of a possibility for moving beyond the situation as it currently presents itself: a movement that is provoked by *crisis,* or by a situation that raises questions for thought and action.

The first three senses of critique—the art of asking questions, the transcendental inquiry into conditions of possibility for meaningful experience, and the quasi-transcendental study of historical conditions of experience—tend to be regressive in their analysis, insofar they seek to reconstruct the conditions and structures that have produced the current situation. The final three senses of critique—the analysis of power, problematization, and the praxis of freedom – are progressive or transformative insofar as they seek to intervene in the current situation, and not just understand how it came to be.[10] The sixth sense of critique as praxis reminds us that it is not enough to be aware of oppression or to understand how it works, we must also figure out how to change it by (re)opening concrete possibilities for survival, escape, healing, and restructuring the world. In this sense, critique is a creative practice—which does not mean that it produces substantive principles that form the basis of a new dogmatism. The fifth sense of critique as problematization still applies here, but praxis urges us to move beyond the identification of problems, and even beyond the assembling of a critical sense of "we," by actively experimenting with collective practices of freedom. If the fourth sense of critique as an analysis of injustice tells us about the conditions under which current world was built—namely, through slavery, colonialism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy—then the sixth sense of critique as praxis challenges us to study, reclaim, imagine, and (re)build alternative ways of being and becoming in relation.

[10] This language of regressive and progressive analysis comes from Sartre's (2004) *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.

One might wonder if critical phenomenology still has need of transcendental critique if it is committed to an historically-grounded, situated analysis of particular lifeworlds with a normative orientation towards practices of freedom. I believe we do need a transcendental argument for the normative orientation towards freedom, even—or especially—if the *meaning* of freedom remains open and indeterminate. One might also wonder if critical theory has much need for phenomenology if so many of the methods that make phenomenology critical come from other intellectual and political traditions. For me, what phenomenology has to offer critical theory is a rigorous practice of *attention* to that which escapes coherent understanding or explanation: attention to alterity, singularity, and the irreducibility of lived lives to the patterns and structures that shape them and the context with which they grapple—even in the midst of this shaping and grappling.

What might a critical phenomenology of experience, improvisation, and experimentation become if we affirmed a methodological hybridity rather than policing the boundaries of what counts as phenomenology? I will leave the last word to Ocean Vuong (2017), who reworks a phenomenological account of attention, deepening its critical and ethical significance:

> Simone Weil says, "Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity." That's my mantra to myself: Pay attention to people, what they care about, their worlds, their words, their aesthetics, their life. I look at Simone Weil and say, "Why don't we edit that?" What if we were so ambitious—to change the word "rarest" to "most common?" What would we then say? "Attention is the most common and purest form of generosity." That's what I'm working toward.

## REFERENCES

Ahmed, Sara. 2006. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Aldea, Andreea Smaranda and Amy Allen, ed. 2016. "Special Issue: Historical A Priori in Husserl and Foucault." *Continental Philosophy Review* 49 (1): 1–137.

Allen, Amy. 2016. *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Arendt, Hannah. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Boggs, Abigail, Eli Meyerhoff, Nick Mitchell, and Zach Schwartz-Weinstein. 2019. "Abolitionist University Studies: An Invitation." *Abolitionist Journal.* https://abolitionjournal.org/abolitionist-university-studies-an-invitation/.

Brown, Wendy. 2005. *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

de Beauvoir, Simone. 1964. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Translated by Bernard Frechtman. New York: The Citadel Press.

Desjarlais, Robert. 2005. "Movement, Stillness: On the Sensory World of a Shelter for the 'Homeless Mentally Ill.'" In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, edited by David Howes, 369–79. Oxford: Berg.

Dodd, James. 2016. "Deep History: Reflections on the Archive and the Lifeworld." *Continental Philosophy Review* 49 (1): 29–39.

Fanon, Frantz. 1965. *A Dying Colonialism*. Translated by Haakon Chevalier. London: Penguin Books.

———. 1986. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann. Forewords by Ziauddin Sardar and Homi K. Bhabha. London: Pluto Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon.

———. 1988. "Practicing Criticism." In *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984*, edited by Lawrence D. Kritzman, 152–56. Translated by Alan Sheridan et al. New York: Routledge.

———. 1994a. "Polemics, Politics, and Problematizations." In *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, edited by Paul Rabinow, 381-90. New York: The New Press.

———. 1994b. "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom." In *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, edited by Paul Rabinow, 281-302. New York: The New Press.

———. 2002. "What Is Critique?" In *The Political*. Edited by David Ingram, 191–211. Oxford: Blackwell.

Gilson, Erinn Cunniff. 2014. "Ethics and the Ontology of Freedom: Problematization and Responsiveness in Foucault and Deleuze." *Foucault Studies* 17: 76–98.

Gordon, Lewis. 1995. *Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism*. New York: Humanity Books.

Harney, Stefano and Moten, Fred. 2004. "The University and the Undercommons: Seven Theses." *Social Text* 22 (2): 101–15.

Hartman, Saidiya. 2019. *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women and Queer Radicals*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Horkheimer, Max. 2002. *Critical Theory*. Translated by Matther J. O'Connell. New York: Continuum.

Husserl, Edmond. 1970. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Translated by David Carr. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Kant, Immanuel. 2008. *Critique of Pure Reason.* Translated by J. H. Bernard. New York: Haffner Press.

Koopman, Colin. 2010. "Historical Critique or Transcendental Critique in Foucault: Two Kantian Lineages." *Foucault Studies* 8: 100–21.

———. 2012. *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Kramer, Sina. 2014. "Derrida's "Antigonanette": On the Quasi-Transcendental." *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 52(4): 521–51.

Marder, Michael. 2014. *Phenomena-critique-logos: The Project of Critical Phenomenology*. London: Rowman and Littlefield.

Mattingly, Cheryl. 2019. "Defrosting Concepts, Destabilizing Doxa: Critical Phenomenology and The Perplexing Particular." *Anthropological Theory* 19 (4): 415–39.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1962. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Colin Smith. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Moten, Fred. 2018. *The Universal Machine*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Oksala, Johanna. 2016. *Feminist Experiences: Foucauldian and Phenomenological Investigations*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Salamon, Gayle. 2010. *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*. New York: Columbia University Press.

———. 2018. "What's Critical about Critical Phenomenology?" *Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology* 1: 8–17.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 2004. *Critique of Dialectical Reason.* Translated by Alan Sheridan-Smith. London: Verso.

Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake (with Eve Tuck). 2016. "Indigenous Resurgence and Co-resistance." *Critical Ethnic Studies* 2 (2): 19–34.

Vuong, Ocean. 2017. "Ocean Vuong on being generous in your work." *The Creative Independent.* Accessed on June 1, 2020. https://thecreativeindependent.com/people/ocean-vuong-on-being-generous-in-your-work/?fbclid=IwAR1KNxJIUjdOTiz2bPOWUKKHav-bgRsLeCJ6pU9yayBPrrZxp4rBxgjnlkI.

Young, Iris Marion. 1990. *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

———. 2011. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Zigon, Jarrett. 2018. *Disappointment: Toward a Critical Hermeneutics of Worldbuilding*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Zurn, Perry. 2021. *Curiosity and Power: The Politics of Inquiry*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

**PUNCTA**
*Journal of Critical Phenomenology*

# EDITH STEIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY: ON SELF-FORMATION AND VALUE-MODIFICATION

RACHEL BATH
*Emory University*

One defining claim that critical phenomenologists make of the critical phenomenological method is that description no longer simply plays the role of detailing the world around the describing phenomenologist, but rather has the potential to transform worlds and persons.[1] The transformative potential of the critical phenomenological enterprise is motivated by aspirations of social and political transformation. Critical phenomenology accordingly takes, as its starting point, descriptions of the oppressive historical social structures and contexts that have shaped our experience and shows how these produce inequitable ways of being in the world (Guenther 2020, 12). For example, critical phenomenologists have provided rich descriptions of marginalized lived experience, particularly racialized experience (Ngo 2017; Yancy 2017), dis-abled experience and experiences of illness (Lajoie and Douglas 2020; Toombs 1993), gendered experience (Beauvoir 2009; Salamon 2010), and so forth. What is common across these accounts is the assumption that these descriptions provide means of enacting political change. First, they illuminate the existence of oppressive structures and their effects upon us, our possibilities, and our relations. Second, through increasing awareness they begin to denaturalize the oppressive historical structures that "privilege, naturalize, and normalize certain experiences of the world while marginalizing, pathologizing, and discrediting others" (Guenther 2020, 15). Third, through strategic responses (e.g., hesitation in Alia Al-Saji's work), they produce new possibilities of action and experience, which initiates the process of creating different ways of being in the world (Al-Saji 2014).[2]

[1] Many thanks to the anonymous reviewers and the editorial team at *Puncta* for their helpful suggestions and feedback.

[2] When I call Al-Saji's concept of hesitation a strategic response that produces new possibilities for action and experience, I am following Al-Saji's proposal that hesitation is a way to interrupt racializing perception (2014). According to Al-Saji, racializing perception overdetermines racialized bodies through a mechanism of othering. When the tacit perceptual practices that sustain racialized perception become habitual, the process of racializing others via perception proceeds very rapidly. Racializing perception occurs faster than thought, which means that critical anti-racist intervention needs to occur at the level of perception itself. Hesitating becomes a way to slow down our perception in order to make it responsive to what it encounters and to also open up a space for critically assessing its features (147).

Critical phenomenological description thus provides a richer sense of how our experience is not neutral but is shaped by oppressive systems of power. A richer sense of how power shapes lived experience can—and should—motivate different ways of living. As Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon (2020) write, critical phenomenology is "an ameliorative phenomenology that seeks *not only to describe but also to repair the world*, encouraging generosity, respect, and compassion for the diversity of our lived experiences" (xiv, author's emphasis). Or as Lisa Guenther (2020) similarly claims, "as a transformative political practice, critical phenomenology must go beyond a description of oppression, developing concrete strategies for dismantling oppressive structures and creating or amplifying different, less oppressive, and more liberatory ways of Being-in-the-world" (16).

In these regards, critical phenomenologists have effectively used descriptions of historical and social structures to show how those structures shape our experiences, possibilities, and subjectivities. Given this, I contend that much of this work has focused on how power—manifested from the outside and then internalized—structures our existence by producing oppressive ways of living. But are we entirely shaped by these external structures? After all, if critical phenomenology assumes that we can make changes to established practices, even at the level of the structure of experience and the form of subjectivity itself, then what makes it possible for us to decide that we might want to live differently in the first place? What changes must take place within us to motivate us to try and live differently, and what must we do to follow through with our desire for change?

To explore these questions, I suggest that Edith Stein's account of the person, with its capacity for self-formation, ought to be recuperated by critical phenomenology. Stein's description of self-formation through value modification provides a model for thinking about how we become ourselves. From Stein, we learn that the values we hold shape who we are insofar as they motivate our feelings, actions, and desires, and thus compose our personal characteristics. As each of us are personally defined by the values we hold and how we comport ourselves towards those values, for Stein, all persons should be understood as valuing beings. However, persons also have a "developmental character" [*Entwicklungscharakter der Menschen*], which means that we are not fixed in our values; we can confirm, reject, revise, or adopt values (1994).[3]

In what follows, I examine the question of how we can decide to live differently in the first place. In section one, I explore how Edith Stein's thinking of self-formation is a useful contribution to critical phenomenological projects, insofar as it allows us to bring to light the role that values play in structuring our actions, feelings, and desires, as well as how value modification can change how we live by changing who we are. Drawing on *On the Problem of Empathy* (1989), *Philosophy of Psychology and Humanities* (2000), *Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person*

[3] The developmental character of the human is due in part to one's personal freedom. While we are never determined from without because we have the power to choose how to behave and what to value, we are also not self-generated but are shaped by our contexts and circumstances. In this way, for Stein, the person is free, but this freedom is limited and situated. In other words, the person develops in the tension between self-formation and determining forces.

(1994), and *Essays on Woman* (1996), I show how, according to Stein, we are persons with personalities, we experience values in the world, and we can take up attitudes towards what we experience.[4] Our personal development involves self-formation, in which we decide who we want to be and how we want to live by modifying our values. Importantly, however, this process is possible only through empathy, which means that self-formation is not the project of an individual who is alone in the world and entirely self-generated but is instead intersubjectively grounded. Because we empathize with the other, we can bring ourselves into relief and establish what is mine and what is other. When empathizing with another in this way, we can discover how we appear to them through a mechanism Stein names "reiterative empathy." From this, we form an image of ourselves in the world and these images deepen or challenge our self-knowledge and provide the impetus for the personal development that takes place in self-formation.

Having laid out Stein's account of the person and the role values play in self-formation, and in order to illustrate what this account can show us, I next apply Stein's account to Iris Marion Young's now-classic account of inhibited feminine bodily comportment.[5] In section two, I first examine Young's account of how sexist oppression motivates certain behavior by instituting and sustaining bodily habits. I show what is gained through a critical focus on power structures in Young's phenomenological description, namely, a robust illustration of how patriarchal forces operate to produce white, heterofeminine comportment. With an eye towards questioning how we should respond to Young's account, I suggest that it follows from Young's essay that we can change how some persons experience living through their bodies by changing bodily habits. I further claim, however, that fully understanding how persons can develop themselves in the face of a patriarchal world requires us to go beyond a consideration of habits, by also questioning what makes it possible for us to decide that we might want to live differently in the first place.

I then bring Stein's arguments for self-formation to bear on the problem of responding to inhibited feminine bodily comportment in order to show how Stein's account of value-modification contributes to both elucidating how inhibited feminine bodily comportment is experienced and provides tools to get beyond this way of living. Here, I illustrate the process of value modification and show the role this process plays in supporting the personal development needed to change bodily habits and open new possibilities for girls and women.

In the third and final section, I position the project of value-modification as a useful tool for critical phenomenology, insofar as it provides concrete means for realizing the transformative promise of critical phenomenology. I suggest that Stein's theory can fruitfully

[4] Due to Edith Stein's elaborate conceptual apparatus, one frequently sees Stein scholars provide evidence for claims made in the body of an article in extensive footnotes. To maintain the flow of this article, I adopt this convention throughout the article.

[5] The presumed white heterofeminity of Young's work must be acknowledged. As Susan K. Cahn (2015) has shown in "'Cinderellas' of Sport: Black Women in Track and Field," feminine bodily comportment has always been raced and classed. Accordingly, Young's description applies only to a select few.

show how it is that we can decide to live differently and, thus, begin the work of pushing back against oppressive structures that naturalize certain ways of living and experiencing.

## I. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AS VALUE MODIFICATION: EDITH STEIN ON SELF-FORMATION

The person is a central theme of Stein's writings.[6] In what follows, I limit my discussion of Stein's concept of the person to three central ideas: first, a consideration of empathy as a condition of self-formation; second, the role values play in shaping our personality and our behavior; and third, the process of value modification as self-formation. As I show, for Stein, empathy is the condition of possibility for self-formation, and thus, the development of our personalities over the course of our lives. By providing us not only with knowledge of the other, but also of ourselves, empathy allows us to actively shape who we become. In this way, we initially learn to reflect upon ourselves as we are in the world with others through empathy. Ultimately, from Stein, we learn that choosing our values shapes how we live by influencing our behavior and desires.

### ON EMPATHY AS A CONDITION OF SELF-FORMATION

Stein's phenomenological exploration of empathy in her dissertation, *On the Problem of Empathy*, paints a picture of empathy that departs from our colloquial understanding of the term.[7] While our working cultural understanding of empathy tends to name our experience of feeling another person's feelings, and thereby understanding their experience, Stein's account of empathy portrays a more fundamental act. That is, empathy is a fundamental act whereby the experience of others is comprehended by us as other. Thus, while for Stein empathy does involve feeling into another's experience, it more importantly names our experience of becoming aware of another person's experience *as* other than our own *within*

[6] Many elements that arise in Stein's discussions of the person are familiar to critical phenomenologists. For example, Stein writes in *Essays on Woman* that the human being is always being in the world (Stein 1996), a theme which becomes a guiding thread for phenomenological research, especially in Martin Heidegger (1923), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945), and Emmanuel Levinas (1961). In addition, Stein anticipates some discussions on the nature of the body found in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. Finally, Stein emphasizes time and again the primacy of intersubjectivity, be it in her phenomenological descriptions of empathy or her descriptions of our experience of larger social and political realities, for example, the social relations of the mass, society, and community.

[7] The translated term empathy is *Einfühlung* in the original German, which can be more literally translated as "feeling-into."

the flow of our own consciousness.[8] This experience is fundamental for understanding ourselves as well as others in the world.[9]

In this regard, empathy is a unique perceptual act for Stein. It is similar to outer perception, or perception of external objects, insofar as both empathy and outer perception intend an object that is given in a here and now (i.e., the experience of this other person who is presently in front of me).[10] However, empathy differs from outer perception insofar as what is intended is given as belonging to someone else (i.e., it is *their* experience, not *mine*) (1989, 6-7, 10-11). In other words, the other's experience given in empathy does not emerge from my "I."[11] For example, let us say that I am in line at a grocery store. The person directly to my left appears impatient. Their arms are crossed, and their toes are tapping as they shift their weight restlessly. They cast their gaze about as they compare the various check-out lines to estimate which one will have the shortest wait time. Through empathy, I perceive their impatience without participating in it myself, and in my perception of their impatience, I recognize that it is their experience—not mine—although I discover their experience in the flow of my own experience. In this regard, empathy allows me to experience the content of another person's experience as their experience (11). But empathy is not only limited to experiencing and knowing the experiences of another person.

Through empathy, we bring ourselves and our experience into relief with the experience of another, and in so doing we may also develop a richer sense of our own self as well as of our experience. If empathy is a form of perception that allows us to grasp another's experience, then through this process we come to knowledge of their experience. However, part of their experience includes *their* empathizing of *us*. The capacity to empathize another's experience of ourselves is what Stein (1989) names reiterative empathy (18). In reiterative

[8] According to Stein (1989), sharing another person's feelings is an instance of "emotional contagion," not empathy (23).

[9] For Stein, empathy goes so far as to provide the ground for objective knowledge of the world (and thus enables the project of phenomenology to get off the ground). As Alasdair MacIntyre (2006) notes, Stein's work on empathy shows how Husserl's entire phenomenological enterprise depends upon a treatment of *Einfühlung*, for only via empathy is there a ground for knowledge of others, objects, world, and self (75-76). While this topic remains largely outside the scope of my paper, I contend that Stein's discussion of self-formation demonstrates how empathy is a condition for self-formation thanks to how it both creates a space for critical self-reflection and also provides the material we work with while self-reflecting.

[10] Stein (1989) defines outer perception as "acts in which spatio-temporal concrete being and occurring come to me in embodied givenness" (6). For example, perception of external objects happens through outer perception. The object is spatially and temporally present to me. When I perceive it, I immediately perceive one of its embodied aspects.

[11] Stein (1986) further explains this point with two distinctions: (1) the distinction between what is primordial and non-primordial, as well as (2) between act and content. What is primordial is what is immediately given within experience. For example, outer perception yields spatio-temporal objects immediately (6). Non-primordial experience involves what is not immediately given in experience. Memories are good examples of non-primordial experience, because while a memory recalls something that was once primordial, it is now only represented in experience (7). Empathy is a unique phenomenon because it is both primordial and non-primordial. It is a primordial *act*, insofar as the act occurs as present experience (10). However, the *content* of this act is non-primordial because this content is lived experience not immediately issuing from my "I" (rather, it issues from another person's I).

empathy, we empathize the content of another person's empathized act, which can give us insight into their comprehension of us or of other persons. Say I am the one being empathized. In this case, I am a part of what the other has intended. Accordingly, when I grasp their experience through empathy, I also receive the part of their experience that includes their empathized experience of me. This means that when my empathy intends their experience, I am given their empathized content of my experience. Such content is, in short, their perception of my experience. In this way, reiterative empathy allows me to receive my original experience as an empathized one. The other has already constituted me as an individual based upon the psychic life exhibited by my bodily expressions and actions, and when I empathize their image of me, I see how I appear to them.

Reiterative empathy is key for self-awareness and self-knowledge. Inner perception can only give us part of the picture of our being. For example, by virtue of reflecting upon our experience, we discover that we are embodied beings who live in the world. We are oriented spatially, experience sensations, and are expressive. However, the empathized image of ourselves as given in reiterative empathy provides a much fuller sense of who we are, insofar as it allows us to see ourselves as we appear to others. We can then compare our inner experience of ourselves with how we appear to others, which provides us with multiple viewpoints on ourselves. Diversifying our viewpoints on ourselves can help us to become aware of instances of self-deception on the one hand and can provide the ground for correcting the perceptions others have of us on the other.[12] Say, for example, that I have recently donated funds to a charitable organization. I might consider this act of seeming good will an altruistic act and think that it suggests that I have a giving disposition. However, the content of reiterative empathy may suggest an alternative interpretation of my character based upon this same act: namely, that my charitable donation is the result of a psychological egoism that seeks validation from performing acts of apparent good will. Through reiterative empathy I can then discover my own self-deception. Alternately, perhaps I compare this data with my own experience of myself and conclude that while it may appear to others that I was not giving altruistically, I did indeed have altruistic motivations. Whatever the result, when I compare the information received through inner perception and empathic perception, I come to a richer sense of who I am. These two sources of self-knowledge can thus complexify, correct, and confirm my self-perception.

**12** We can receive damaging images of ourselves from others. The other does not perceive us neutrally but inserts us into a pre-existing framework, one which defines in advance how we are to be interpreted. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon (2008) powerfully illustrates the violence that can happen when racialized and colonized individuals are returned to themselves. In the fifth chapter, Fanon describes the experience of being given to himself by the white child who objectifies him, leading to the collapse of his body schema and the installation of a racial epidermal schema. In this gesture, "my body was returned to me spread-eagled, disjointed, redone, draped in mourning on this white winter's day" (93). He is "overdetermined from the outside . . . A slave not to the 'idea' others have of me, but to my appearance" (95). Bringing Stein into the conversation here suggests that images of ourselves from others are received through the mechanism of reiterative empathy.

There is an additional way in which reiterative empathy can increase self-knowledge. As Sarah Borden (2003) argues, when we grasp another's view of us, we create an opportunity to realize latent personal possibilities (30). One such personal possibility involves the development of character traits. Through reiterative empathy, we may discover ourselves to be lacking certain traits, but this discovery itself may motivate us to develop those traits. Consider the example of courage to clarify this point. When I see an individual exhibit courage, the self-understanding that arises from my reiterated empathy of their experience may show me the lack of courage in my current character. However, we may also discover in us an ability to become courageous. Following this, then, I may be able to realize courage as a character trait arising from this encounter. In short, the empathic encounter provides us with an opportunity for critical self-reflection, especially when it comes to elucidating self-deception. Such critical self-reflection enables the possibility for realizing latent personal possibilities, especially with regards to the development of different character traits.

By enabling the possibility of critical self-reflection and self-evaluation, empathy plays a crucial role in allowing for self-growth. Empathy is thus a ground for self-formation. But what else is involved in self-formation? In the next section, I explore values as the second component of self-formation. There can be no self-formation without values, since self-formation develops our personality and our personality is both disclosed by and constituted through our values.

## THE PLACE AND ROLE OF VALUES IN PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOR

In Stein's (1989) view, each person has a personality and an ability to value. The human ability to value is so crucial a feature to understanding specific persons (as well as to understanding the concept of the person in general), that in *On the Problem of Empathy* Stein writes: "it is impossible to formulate a doctrine of the person . . . without a value doctrine, and that the person can be obtained from such a value doctrine" (108). Similarly, in *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* (2000), she notes that "as it were, we see what the person *is* when we see which world of value she lives in, which values she is responsive to, and what achievements she may be creating, prompted by values" (227). Hence, to grasp how Stein understands who we as individuals are, as well as how we act and how we feel, we must examine our values to see how they structure our behavior and personality. In what follows, first, I briefly review how Stein understands values. Second, I show how our personal values are revealed in emotional experiences and in experiences of willing. Third, I consider how values come to constitute persons, such that we can be understood through them.

While Stein never defines her use of the term "value," she does describe the experience of valuing, in which we grasp values through feelings. For Stein, there is no such thing as a value-free world. Each time we constitute an object through perception, we simultaneously constitute the value of that object. We can abstract into a theoretical stance, in which case objects can appear as mere things, but otherwise we are always axiologically oriented,

which means that we discover things through their values: be those aesthetic, ethical, or religious values (160). In being axiologically oriented, we are attuned to experience through feeling, and those feelings disclose values to us.[13] As Íngrid Vendrell-Ferran (2017) writes, "on Stein's view, in the same sense that perceiving makes accessible the objects of the physical world such as colors and sounds, the act of feeling makes values accessible to us" (76). An example is helpful here. When I perceive a maple tree in autumn in a cooler climate, after its foliage has begun to change but before the leaves have fallen, I don't just see the tree as an object; rather, I am struck by the *beauty* of the tree. The beauty inspires various feelings, perhaps of gladness, awe, and peace. The beauty is the value of the tree; the feelings of joy, awe, and peace are what disclose the beauty of the maple tree and show how we value it.

Now that we understand how Stein envisions values in a general sense, and specifically how values are revealed through our feelings, we can look more closely at how our personal values are discovered in our emotional experiences. To understand this, let us consider Stein's comparison of our feelings over three different kinds of loss. She suggests that our feeling of anger over a lost piece of jewelry is likely more superficial than the feeling that we experience when we lose jewelry that was a souvenir from a loved one. The latter feeling penetrates more deeply than the former. Deeper still, however, would be our pain over the loss of the loved one themselves. This is because the loved one is more deeply valued than their jewelry, and their jewelry is more deeply valued than a different piece of jewelry: a fact disclosed by the difference between our feelings. Hence, as Stein writes (1989), "this [variation in our emotional experiences] discloses essential relationships among the hierarchy of felt values, the depth classification of value feelings, and the level classification of the person exposed in these feelings" (101). In other words, our value feelings not only reveal what values we personally hold, but, further, how we value those values. While both pieces of jewelry and the loved one were all valuable, they were valued in different ways, as was reflected by how the loss of each reached a different level in us.[14]

Not only are our values discovered in experiences of feelings; they are also discovered in experiences of willing, or the activity of the free will. We discover our values in what we will because willing is based on feeling, and feelings are grounded on values (Stein

**13** Technically speaking, Stein distinguishes between the act of grasping values and the feeling of values. As Íngrid Vendrell-Ferran (2017) points out, this allows Stein to explain instances when we are aware of a value without fully feeling it (77-78). For example, having witnessed the joy soap operas give my grandmother, I am aware of their value, but I do not personally feel their value. In this paper, I am interested exclusively in instances where we are made aware of personal values through feeling.

**14** Stein (1989) will argue that our value hierarchies and our value feelings are rationally grounded and, further, that there are possible "right" or "wrong" ways of being ordered in these regards. Poorly ordered hierarchies are reflective of irrationality, and properly ordered hierarchies are reflective of rationality. As she writes, "if someone is 'overcome' by the loss of his wealth … he feels irrational" (101). Presumably, this is because the loss of wealth should not be such a deep loss that it overcomes us and leaves us feeling entirely bereft, and that if we are so overcome, then our values are not well-ordered.

1989, 108).[15] This means that willing discloses our values because our action is motivated by our values.[16] Our actions do not occur from out of nowhere, but instead emerge from a meaning context. This meaning context Stein names motivation. Motivation is the temporal connection between acts that structures the unique flow of our experience (40-41). Motivation structures the arising of experiences by motivating each act, one out of the other. In this regard, because our actions are motivated, they arise out of our history of prior acts, and are meaningful based on that history. While motivation creates a strong connectivity between acts, it does not necessitate our action, as we also experience an element of freedom understood as a commitment to the doing on our part (55).[17] This means that actions are motivated *and* include a "fiat!," that is, an "inner jolt" or an impulse that is not itself motivated (2000, 55, 57). Willed actions thus reflect our values because our values motivate actions, and further, because our actions involve an inner commitment to those motivating values.

The concepts of motivation and value explain how we understand persons. Everyone's psychic life is structured as the flow of motivations that specifically pertains to them. Because their values are their motives, everything someone does or feels reflects their personally held values. Hence, as Marianne Sawicki (2001) reflects, "we come to know unique persons through the unique patterns they create by their choices among rationally motivated options—or sometimes by their irrational refusals of them" (84). Or as Mette Lebech (2010) explains,

> [w]e experience concrete human persons to be carriers of value in a variety of ways. We evaluate their character, for example, which we constitute from our understanding of their value-response, in particular from the order in which we see them place the values, their value-hierarchy. The personality of a person is, according to Stein, the specificity of the person determined or stamped by its character… Personality is not however, like the person, pure spiritual capacity: it is this capacity as already determined in certain ways by typical or decisive value responses… The personality reflects the

[15] "This feeling of value is the source of all cognitive striving and 'what is at the bottom' of all cognitive willing" (Stein 1989, 108).

[16] "Motivation, in our general sense, is *the* connection that acts get into with one another: not a mere blending like that of simultaneously or sequentially ebbing phases of experiences, or the associative tying together of experiences, but an *emerging* of the one *out of* the other, a self fulfilling or being fulfilled of the one *on the basis of* the other *for the sake of* the other" (Stein 2000, 41). As psychic causality, motivation is similar to natural causality insofar as it functions to create a coherence in psychic reality, but it differs from natural causality because it does not involve necessity. All our mental acts are motivated and thus their emergence creates a meaning context.

[17] "But the availability of motives does not *compel* the ego to accomplish the acts in question. These acts do not simply impose themselves on grounds of motives, as attitudes to. The ego can have and acknowledge the motives and it can abstain from the acts in spite of that" (Stein 2000, 55).

> choices of the person and marks what he has done with himself as a person; it is the source of the specificity of the person's spontaneity and the first expression of the person's creativity as such. (147-48)

Because every person is a carrier of values, every person can be understood through the way they respond to their values. Every individual has their unique set of values and their unique way of classifying values, and it is through how they respond to those values that you can come to know who they are. When it comes to our own values, we aren't immediately aware of our values but can discover them through reflection upon our feelings and our actions. This is especially the case regarding values we have picked up without even realizing it. We might even discover that we hold different values than we thought when we empathize with others and see our actions and expressions from their perspective. In any case, our values as motives produce the unique way each of us have of realizing values. Our unique ways of realizing our values thus becomes our style of living.

For these reasons, we are not immediately transparent to ourselves, but need self-reflection and, more specifically, empathic experiences with others to discover our values. As we saw earlier, reiterative empathy provides the opportunity for self-evaluation by way of increasing self-knowledge and enabling self-critique. Hence, reiterative empathy can become the ground for evaluating our values. As Stein (1989) writes:

> [w]e not only learn to make ourselves into objects, as earlier, but through empathy with "related natures," i.e., persons of our type, what is "sleeping" in us is developed. By empathy with differently composed personal structures we become clear on what we are not, what we are more or less than others. Thus, together with self knowledge, we also have an important aid to self evaluation. Since the experience of value is basic to our own value, at the same time as new values are acquired by empathy, our own unfamiliar values become visible. When we empathically run into ranges of value closed to us, we become conscious of our own deficiency or disvalue. Every comprehension of different persons can become the basis of an understanding of value. (116)

Through empathy, we measure ourselves against the other and discover values we hold as well as values we do not. We see ourselves and others as persons, or as value-creating or value-holding beings. We discover our personality through acts of empathy and are given the opportunity to create or reject those values based upon that discovery. Accordingly, it is only through experiences of empathy as well as critical self-reflection that we can begin the process of explicit self-formation that can enable value confirmation, rejection, modification, or adoption. To explain this claim further, let us now turn to an explanation of self-formation through value-modification for Stein.

## ON SELF-FORMATION THROUGH VALUE-MODIFICATION

We have already seen how values shape our personalities; what remains to be shown is how—and to what extent—we can choose our values and thus participate in forming our personalities.[18] As Antonio Calcagno (2014) puts it, "Stein claims that, in choosing certain values, we become aware that these values affect and structure who we are; they shape certain of our attributes and help to structure and unfold what Stein calls our personality" (99-100). For Stein, once we become aware of the role values play in informing our personalities, we can actively participate in value creation. Because the ego is the "boss" of its own experience, it can confirm, reject, or adopt a value on the basis of information received in the course of experience (2000, 52). From this, pertinent value feelings arise, as do desires and actions: "The grasping of a value can motivate a disposition (for example, joy in beauty) and, accordingly, a wanting and doing (perhaps the realizing of a state of affairs recognized as morally right)" (42). In this way, discovering our values through our value feelings can motivate us to choose or reject values, and through this activity, we actively participate in choosing our own personal attributes and thereby shaping our personality.

More specifically, we can participate in shaping our comportment toward our own values through our attitudes.[19] Attitudes occur to me based upon how I take up the object of an experience (Stein 2000, 48). I am passive in the face of attitudes; they seize me. However, Stein notes that we can "take a stance" toward attitudes. We can accept or deny them. That is,

> I can "take a stance" toward the attitude, in a new sense. I can accept it, plant my feet upon it, and declare my allegiance to it; or, I can comport myself negatively against it. Suppose I accept it—that means that if it emerges in me I give myself over to it, joyously, without reluctance. Suppose I deny it—that doesn't mean I eliminate it. That's not under my control. "Canceling out" a belief would require new motives, through which the motives of the original

[18] According to Stein (1989), if we don't choose to self-form, then we can't become ourselves in a genuine manner. Stein describes the possibility that we may feel and act according to how we are "supposed" to feel and act, and not from a genuine feeling. In this case, Stein would say that we haven't become ourselves. We aren't in touch with ourselves and have not become a personality. Nor have we assumed our freedom and our responsibility for that freedom (111).

[19] Stein (2000) does not explain the nature of attitudes [*Stellungnahme*, literally "position-taking"] as thoroughly as one might hope. Some examples of attitudes include the natural attitude and the phenomenological attitude, or even a romantic feeling towards someone (whether you assent to the feeling or struggle against it is another question). Stein (1996) also defines an ethos as a spiritual attitude and claims that an ethos is an inner-position taking with regards to values that provides an organizing form to the person's comportment. From various discussions, it seems that attitudes have a judgement component (insofar as they are position-takings on values); they are unwilled and involuntary; they are grounded on the value-object that motivates them; they have an affective dimension (or are at least inwardly related to affectivity); and they arise as "alive" and "operative" but can be rendered "inoperative." Clarifying fully Stein's concept of an attitude is a project for another paper.

> belief are invalidated and from which the cancellation is established instead "all by itself." But I need not acknowledge this belief. I can comport myself just as though it were not present; I can make it inoperative. (It is this, the comporting, that Husserl designated as *epochē*. The acts rendered inoperative are "neutralized." (49)

Adopting or denying an attitude is itself a motivated act (50). Accordingly, if I want to change how I comport myself in relation to a value, I can deny the attitude that the value motivates, and in this way, I push back against the feelings that the value arouses. To supplant the original attitude, the new attitude requires a motive that is either stronger or more deeply valued than the original value motive; merely eliminating the attitude is impossible. As Lebech (2015) writes, "[t]hat means I place one value as more important than another, or recognize in one value a higher motivating power than in the other" (37). This deeper value will become the stronger motive, and if repeatedly realized, will take on a formative role in shaping who we become over time, at least in part by eventually invalidating the original motive. In this way, we can revise our values through the stances we take toward our attitudes. In doing so we install new motives, themselves motivated by different values, and we designate these new values as more important than the preceding values.

Due to our capacity for value-modification, we experience (limited and situated) freedom for self-formation. We can choose the values to commit to and the ones to supplant. However, we are not entirely self-generated beings. We are shaped by what we encounter in empathic experiences. We are also shaped by the world we are born into and the structures we inherit in those worlds. Our bodies also present natural limits to our freedom. Similarly, our own personal histories both enable and restrict our options, insofar as they form the meaningful context from which our possibilities arise. The point I wish to make is that within these limitations, we have an ability to decide whether we want to be for or against the values, feelings, and actions that compose our lives and shape our personalities. In this, we confirm, reject, or adopt new values, and through this activity we decide how we want to comport ourselves towards our values.

Following Stein, then, our values shape how we behave and who we as persons are, which means that to change our behavior and our character, we need to change our values. In other words, in order to decide that we might want to change some of the habits that hold us back, we need not only to change our environments and adapt new behaviors, but also change the values we hold so that we can be motivated towards different actions in the first place. In order to illustrate this claim more thoroughly, in the following sections I put Young's account of inhibited feminine bodily intentionality into conversation with Stein's account of self-formation as value-modification.

## II. HOW DO WE CHANGE INHIBITED FEMININE BODILY INTENTIONALITY? RECONCILING YOUNG AND STEIN

Many of us are familiar with Iris Marion Young's (1980) analysis in "Throwing like a Girl." In order to consider how feminine bodily comportment develops as a style of being, Young draws on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the lived body—particularly as it pertains to the way the lived body aims toward the accomplishment of tasks—and Simone de Beauvoir's understanding of women's situation as a tension between immanence and transcendence. Summarizing Young's analysis is outside the scope of this paper, so I shall limit myself to discussing only a few of the main points.

According to Young, there is a typically feminine style of comportment, which is an inhibited style of comportment that does not make use of the body's full capabilities. Women hesitate when using their bodies, both because they lack confidence in their own bodily capacities and because they fear getting hurt. Accordingly, "[women] often experience [their] bodies as a fragile encumberance [*sic*], rather than the media for the enactment of [their] aims" (144). As a result, women "throw like girls": instead of bringing their whole bodies into action when throwing a ball, by drawing the arms apart and stepping forward into the throw, women focus their efforts on the wrist and elbow, flicking the ball in a general direction.

Young identifies several sources that encourage this behavior. In general, inhibited feminine comportment is due to women's situation—that is, her existence in a patriarchal society: "Insofar as we learn to live out our existence in accordance with the definition that patriarchal culture assigns to us," Young writes, "we are physically inhibited, confined, positioned, and objectified" (144). Young does indicate more specific sources, however. For example, she notes both negative and positive forms of socialization which encourage young girls to assume a feminine style of bodily comportment. Young girls (and women as well) are not given the opportunity to learn how to freely engage with the world through their whole bodies. This constrains their opportunities to develop confidence in their own bodies and capabilities. At the same time, girls are encouraged to behave in restrictive "feminine" ways. Such encouragement actively inhibits their movement, promotes a lack of confidence in their bodies, and redirects their focus onto other issues, such as how their bodies appear rather than of what they are capable. These two sources help create the habits that form the basis for feminine bodily comportment. We can see this in the play between young girls; their movement is encouraged to be sedentary and enclosing, and their activities encourage them to control the use of their bodies in specifically feminine ways (i.e., not getting dirty, sitting quiet and still, etc.). In short, girls are encouraged to live their bodies as objects and not as subjects.

While Young does not offer specific recommendations towards changing women's inhibited comportment, I propose that one response would be to encourage girls to relate to their bodies as subjects and to encourage them to build confidence in their bodily capacities. Encouraging girls to relate to their bodies as subjects can change sedimented habits of spatial self-enclosure or stop those habits from taking hold in the first place. Such encouragement is focused in part on bodily behavior and in part on creating environments

that would encourage girls to stretch out and feel empowered to take up space. But is there more that goes into changing women's inhibited comportment than challenging and transforming bodily habits and changing environments? For example, why might we decide that we want to live differently in the first place, or want other girls and women to be able to choose to live differently? And how do we begin the process of living differently beyond changing bodily habits? What "inner" process precedes and supports our decision to modify our bodily habits?

This is indeed where Stein's account of self-formation becomes helpful. Stein's account of self-formation illustrates that our decisions about how we want to live are decisions about our values: particularly the relationship between our values, our personal characteristics, and our behaviors. Bringing this account into conversation with Young's insights shows that value-modification is a useful complement to Young's account, insofar as it details how the personal development required to change how we live takes place. To illustrate this more fully, let us take as a starting point Young's concept of inhibited feminine bodily comportment and examine it in the context of an example of someone riding a public bus. To this I apply Stein's account in order to show what her analysis contributes alongside Young's.

There are many ways those who have internalized values with regards to inhibited feminine bodily comportment can experience those values. For simplicity's sake, I will consider one scenario. The subject of our example is on a public bus. They sit with their legs and arms crossed and take up as little space as possible. They have internalized the value that it is good to be a "properly feminine person," which involves the set of expectations and norms that establish that properly feminine persons are small, quiet, and non-threatening. They have not yet in their lived experience encountered another set of values which would bring this value to light and demonstrate for them how it has structured their experience and character. Accordingly, the value remains invisible, but this does not lessen its motivational power; rather, this value lives in the various feelings it evokes (for example, subtle feelings of comfort when the subject meets the norm the value installs, as is the case in their present comportment on the bus, and feelings of discomfort when they do not) as well as the various actions it evokes (for example, the crossing of legs and arms). Then the subject of our example reads Young's essay and is deeply moved. Awed by the revelations they find in this text, for the first time they become aware of their own internalized value of inhibited feminine bodily comportment. They become further aware of how this value has expressed itself in their behavior, feelings, and desires, shaping their character and the sorts of possibilities they have perceived themselves capable of realizing. What is next for our subject?

The subject of our example has many possibilities. For instance, they may carry on as they previously have. This they may do so for numerous reasons. For example, their behavior would not change if they continued to accept the customary value of inhibited bodily comportment and in this way embrace an affirmative attitude toward it. Alternately, they may not truly affirm the value, but for any variety of reasons they may also choose not to supplant it. Certainly, various forms of bodily comportment may be unsafe for certain individuals and/or in certain situations, which could motivate someone to not supplant a

new value or comport themselves differently with regards to their values. Or perhaps they do install a new value—that it is good for them to take up space—but this value does not take root deep enough in them to combat the motivating power of the initial value.

We can follow Stein's insights to understand at least part of what takes place if our subject does decide to install a new value. The subject may decide to contest their habitual way of comporting themselves as a way of contesting the value of inhibited feminine bodily comportment and the norm this value instills. They attempt to interrupt their own habits in order to change how they live and experience themselves and others in the world. In this case, the subject must install a new value (that it is good to take up space) deep enough that it can supplant the original value, which will motivate a new attitude. In so doing, they reject the old value and refuse acquiescence to their initial feelings, actions, and desires, which is to say they have taken a stance and assumed an attitude that denies the original value's motivating power. Then they have installed a new value, nurtured this value through an affirmative attitude, and embraced the feelings, actions, and desires that the new value motivates. This is what provided the impetus to change their habits in the first place and enables them to persist in this activity when the initial motivating surge of feelings that Young's essay motivated has worn off.

Bringing Stein's analysis into conversation with Young here shows how value modification can lead to personal development and supports the work of changing bodily habits. Through self-formation, a space to step back and assess ourselves and our lives is appropriated. This work allows us to creatively commit to our values, and to embrace our developmental character in a spirit that leads to us assuming our freedom and responsibility in self-formation. Modifying our values shapes who we are by shaping how we live.

It is crucial, however, not to overestimate one's freedom of choice when all our choices are shaped by formative forces. As mentioned before, Stein herself underscores how we are shaped by the worlds we are born into, by our empathic encounters with others, and by the experiences we have during our existence. In this way, insofar as she shows that the person is always intersubjective and shaped by material circumstances, her work complicates the received view that the classical phenomenological subject is individualistic. In various writings, Stein herself highlights the influence culture, gender, our bodies, personal history, interpersonal relationships, material circumstances, our inherent predispositions, and our bodies have on self-formation.[20] For Stein, while our egos are the boss of our experiencing, we are not the sole masters of our selves; our development is indebted to many formative forces, such that the agency we exert in our own formation is ultimately only one element in our development. Hence, while we *do* have freedom of choice in self-formation, we do not have the ultimate say in who we become, nor is it entirely clear at any point the extent to which the choices we find available to us are shaped from without.

[20] For more on how culture, gender, history, material circumstances, and other influences shape our self-formative processes, see especially: *On the Problem of Empathy* (1989), *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* (2000), *Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person* (1994), and *Essays on Woman* (1996).

## III. STEIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY

In conclusion, I return briefly to my initial claim that Stein's account of self-formation is a useful contribution to the critical phenomenological project. Through Stein's account, we begin to see just how it is that someone can decide to live differently and what such a process involves. That is, we discover how—through value modification—personal transformation takes place at the individual level. The change that follows from value-modification encourages the development of a different character and motivates different ways of living and valuing. Without changing our values, we cannot change how we live, nor can we hope to change the larger structures and forces that shape our identities, relationships, and possibilities.

More specifically, Stein shows us how reiterative empathy serves to make the choice to change not an individualistic decision (although it is borne by individuals), but instead reflects our ties to others and to the world. Recalling how reiterative empathy allows us to deepen or challenge our self-image, we learn from Stein that it is through our encounters with others that the impetus for change in ourselves and our lives can even arise and become the basis for self-formation. Consider the well-meaning white person who believes that they are not racist. Through an interaction with another person they may discover their own racism, and this expanded self-knowledge may be the impetus for change. Robin DiAngelo describes such a moment for herself when her colleague pointed out to her that her carefulness at not making a racist mistake is not only evident to others but is an expression of her own internalized racism, one which motivated reserved and cold behavior toward people of color. As DiAngelo (2016) writes:

> I suddenly felt *uncovered* as a white person. I realized that I expected my friend to see me as I saw myself—outside of race. I also had a sudden realization of what it must look like for people of color when whites are being careful around them. We look stiff, uncomfortable, uptight, and reserved. As I pictured myself being careful around people of color in this way, I also saw why they experienced that as racism. I certainly wasn't warm, relaxed, sincere, or open when I was being careful. (241)

From Stein's account of reiterative empathy, then, we see that it is because we exist with others that we may want to change, insofar as it is through reiterative empathy that we discover characteristics in us that we do not find valuable. Yet we also see that wanting to change must also come from within us in the form of an inner commitment to different values and an attitudinal shift that supports the rooting of new values (and the uprooting of stale values).

From Stein we also discover how value-modification is both the process for self-formation and can be deliberately appropriated as a tool for personal development. Once we become aware of how self-formation works—namely, through value-modification—we can take up this process deliberately. Indeed, Stein insists that our freedom as human beings comes in the form of self-formation, and that our freedom is intertwined with our

responsibility for how we form ourselves.[21] In other words, we assume our responsibility for ourselves when we deliberately engage in self-formation, and this is something that we accomplish through value-modification, through confirming, modifying, or negating values depending upon our larger views on who we want to be and how we want to live in the world with others.

For this reason, I suggest that explicitly addressing self-formation through value-modification is a useful tool for critical phenomenology. This account answers questions concerning our internal motivation for wanting to change how we live and respond to the world we live in. In addition, once we become explicitly aware of the process, we can develop value-modification as a strategy and inquire directly into what it takes to truly supplant unhelpful or oppressive values. In short, as a project, value-modification continues the critical phenomenological project, for it provides tools to effect the transformation that critical phenomenology seeks and promises.

## REFERENCES

Al-Saji, Alia. 2014. "A Phenomenology of Hesitation: Interrupting Racializing Habits of Seeing." In *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Race*, edited by Emily S. Lee, 133–72. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Baseheart, Mary Catharine. 1997. *Person in the World: Introduction to the Philosophy of Edith Stein*. Dordrecht, ND: Springer Scienc & Business Media.

Beauvoir, Simone de. 2009. *The Second Sex*, translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. New York: Vintage Books.

Borden, Sarah. 2003. *Edith Stein*. New York: Continuum.

Calcagno, Antonio. 2014. *Lived Experience from the Inside Out*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

———. *The Philosophy of Edith Stein*. 2007. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Davis, Duane H. 2020. "The Phenomenological Method." In *50 Concepts for a Critical* Phenomenology*, edited by Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon, 3–9. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

DiAngelo, Robin J. 2016. *What Does It Mean To Be White? Developing White Racial Literacy*. New York: Peter Lang.

[21] "What does it mean that the human is responsible for himself? It means that it is up to him what he is and that it is demanded of him to make something certain out of himself: He can and should form himself" (Stein 1994, 65; my translation).

Guenther, Lisa. 2020. "Critical Phenomenology." In *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*, edited by Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon, 11–16. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Lajoie, Corinne and Emily R. Douglas, eds. 2020. "Critically Sick: New Phenomenologies of Illness, Madness, and Disability." Special issue, *Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology* 3 (2).

Lebech, Mette. 2004. "Study Guide to Edith Stein's Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities." *Yearbook ofthe Irish Philosophical Society*: 40–76.

———. 2010. "Edith Stein's Value Theory and Its Importance for Her Conception of the State." In *Europa Und Seine Anderen: Emmanuel Levinas, Edith Stein, Jozef Tischner*, edited by Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, René Kaufmann, and Hans Rainer Sepp, 145–54. Dresden, DE: Thelem.

———. 2015. "Motivation and Value." In *The Philosophy of Edith Stein: From Phenomenology to Metaphysics*, 27–38. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Macintyre, Alasdair. 2006. *Edith Stein: A Philosophical Prologue*. New York: Continuum.

Moran, Dermot. 2017. "Edith Stein's Encounter with Edmund Husserl and Her Phenomenology of the Person." In *Empathy, Sociality, and Personhood: Essays on Edith Stein's Phenomenological Investigations*, edited by Elisa Magrì and Dermot Moran, 31–47. Cham, CH: Springer International Publishing.

Ngo, Helen. 2017. *The Habits of Racism: A Phenomenology of Racism and Racialized Embodiment*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Salamon, Gayle. 2010. *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*. New York: Columbia University Press.

———. 2018. "What's Critical about Critical Phenomenology?" *Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology* 1: 8–17.

Sawicki, Marianne. 2001. "Edith Stein's Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities: The Jahrbuch Treatises of 1922." In *The Eighteenth Annual Symposium of the Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center*, 69–95. Pittsburgh, PA: Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center.

Sepp, Hans Rainer. 2017. "Edith Stein's Conception of the Person Within the Context of the Phenomenological Movement." In *Empathy, Sociality, and Personhood: Essays on Edith Stein's Phenomenological Investigations*, edited by Elisa Magrì and Dermot Moran, 49-62. Cham, CH: Springer International Publishing.

Stein, Edith. 1989. *On the Problem of Empathy*. 3rd ed. Translated by Waltraut Stein. Washington: ICS Publications.

———. 1994. *Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person. Vorlesung zur philosophischen Anthropologie*. Vol 14 of Edith-Stein-Gesamtausgabe (Karmel Maria Vom Frieden Online Archive). Made available online: https://www.karmelitinnen-koeln.de/edith-stein-archivkk/gesamtausgabe.

———. 1996. *Essays on Woman*. Edited by Lucy Gelber and Romaeus Leuven. Translated by Freda Mary Oben. Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications.

———. 2000. *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*. Edited by Marianne Sawicki. Translated by Mary Catharine Baseheart and Marianne Sawicki. Washington: ICS Publications.

Toombs, Kay S. 1993. *The Meaning of Illness: A Phenomenological Account of the Different Perspectives of Physician and Patient*. Dordrecht, NL: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Vendrell-Ferran, Íngrid. 2015. "Empathy, Emotional Sharing and Feelings in Stein's Early Work." *Human Studies* 38 (4): 481–502.

———. 2017. "Intentionality, Value Disclosure, and Constitution: Stein's Model." In *Empathy, Sociality, and Personhood: Essays on Edith Stein's Phenomenological Investigations*, edited by Elisa Magrì and Dermot Moran, 65–85. Cham, CH: Springer International Publishing.

Weiss, Gail, and Ann V. Murphy. 2020. "Introduction: Transformative Descriptions." In *50 Concepts for a Critical* Phenomenology*, edited by Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon, xiii–xiv. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Yancy, George. 2017. *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race in America*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Young, Iris Marion. 1980. "Throwing like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality." *Human Studies* 3: 137-56.

**PUNCTA**
*Journal of Critical Phenomenology*

# LEVINAS, ADORNO, AND THE LIGHT OF REDEMPTION: NOTES ON A CRITICAL ESCHATOLOGY

DYLAN SHAUL
*University of Toronto*

It seems natural to suppose that the burgeoning field of critical phenomenology would come to bear at least some affinities or resemblances (whether implicitly or explicitly) to critical theory, insofar as both are deeply concerned with directing a rigorous critical eye towards the most pressing political, economic, cultural, and social issues of our time.[1] Yet critical theory has also had its share of critics of phenomenology itself, not least of which was the foremost member of the first-generation Frankfurt School critical theorists, Theodor W. Adorno. Adorno's critique of phenomenology was, for historical reasons, confined to Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, and might be concisely put as follows: for Adorno, classical phenomenology is insufficiently *critical* towards contemporary realities of oppression and domination (an insufficiency variously attributed to an alleged pernicious idealism, solipsism, methodological individualism, descriptivism, or ahistoricism in classical phenomenology).[2] On this count, critical phenomenologists today may very well agree—at least to the point of affirming that phenomenology's critical potential remained largely "untapped" in its classical formulations. However, in a twist of historical fate, Adorno failed to engage with a contemporaneous phenomenologist with whom he perhaps had more in common than anyone else: Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas himself was also notably critical of Husserl and Heidegger (while of course also being enormously indebted to them), for reasons not altogether dissimilar to Adorno's. For Levinas, phenomenology had hitherto neglected the fundamental ethical or moral dimensions of experience—in particular our ethical responsibility towards the Other in the face of the manifold evils and injustices of

[1] For existing work on the general relationship between critical phenomenology and critical theory, see Salamon (2018a) and Guenther (2020). The present paper builds on this work by drawing a detailed comparison between a specific phenomenologist (Levinas) and a specific critical theorist (Adorno), with the project of critical phenomenology in mind.

[2] For Adorno's critique of Husserl, see Adorno (2013). For Adorno's critique of Heidegger, see Adorno (2003). For a book-length account of Adorno's relationship to Husserl, Heidegger, and classical phenomenology (as well as existentialism), see Gordon (2016). A serious consideration of the details of Adorno's critique of classical phenomenology exceeds the bounds of the present paper.

the world.[3] What might Adorno have thought of Levinas's work, and Levinas of Adorno's? What might they have learned from one another? And how might this exchange have affected the trajectories of critical theory, phenomenology, or critical phenomenology?

This article is motivated by the possibility that bringing Levinas's phenomenology and Adorno's critical theory into a mutually illuminating and enriching conversation can meaningfully contribute to the ongoing development of critical phenomenology. Though a number of studies have compared and contrasted these two thinkers from a variety of angles, I will take up a set of themes that has not yet received direct and thorough attention: both thinkers' central concern with a redemptive or messianic futurity, which provides the basis for what I will identify as a shared "critical eschatology."[4] In particular, I will argue that Levinas and Adorno's respective critical eschatologies share three key features: a fundamental ethical responsibility toward that which exceeds systematization or totalization (the Other and the non-identical, respectively), a refusal of philosophical theodicy in view of the historical catastrophes of the 20th century, and a foregrounding of the "light of redemption" as the key methodological tool proper to the recognition of the preceding concerns. (Of course, there may be as many differences between Levinas and Adorno as there are similarities, and any full account of the relation between these two thinkers would have to take both into account. If this study emphasizes the similarities at the expense of a robust consideration of the differences, it is only due to limitations of space, and the general sense that these similarities are less obvious and less frequently remarked upon, thus warranting being drawn out here at length.)

In section one to follow, I consider Levinas's and Adorno's shared identification of the inherent limits to philosophy's systematizing or totalizing activities, affirming the radical alterity that surpasses these limits as the locus of ethical responsibility. For Levinas, the Other constitutes an "infinity" that transcends every totality, and so perpetually overflows every thought that attempts to think it or conceptualize it. The ethical is precisely a matter of responding to and caring for the Other in view of its domination by the Same, gestures given expression not least by Levinasian phenomenology itself. For Adorno, the non-identical escapes every effort to grasp it in the terms of identity (paradigmatically, conceptual thought). Giving voice to the suffering of the non-identical under the grip of identity is a self-described condition for the truth of Adorno's critical theory. This above all comprises its profound ethical thrust. Just as Adorno's theory of the non-identical gives rise

[3] References throughout Levinas's corpus would be too numerous to cite here, but it would be worth mentioning in this regard that Levinas's critique of Husserl and Heidegger had already begun in his earliest studies, e.g., Levinas (1995, 1998c).

[4] Existing work connecting and comparing Adorno and Levinas has taken up this connection and comparison via questions of religion and theology (de Vries 2005), ethics and materiality (Nelson 2020), and aesthetics (Smith 2006; Belmer 2019), among others. Particular attention has been paid to similarities and differences between Levinas and Adorno's responses to the Holocaust (Eisenstadt 2006; Sachs 2011; Portella 2019). I take my emphasis on eschatology and redemption to offer a new perspective on the Levinas-Adorno relationship that nonetheless builds upon all of these prior studies, to which I am indebted in innumerable ways.

to a negative dialectics, Levinas's phenomenology of the Other gives rise to a unique ethical variety of negative theology: it is the "negativity" of these two approaches that lends them their critical edge.

In section two, I consider Levinas and Adorno's shared understanding of the historical catastrophes of the 20th century as delivering a definitive repudiation of the traditional philosophical project of theodicy (whether in its Leibnizian or Hegelian formulations, among others). With parallel biographies as European Jewish intellectuals born at the turn of the century, Levinas and Adorno each identify the Holocaust (or Auschwitz, by metonymy) as a historical refutation of any and every attempt to offer a comprehensive rational justification for human suffering. For Adorno, horror in the face of the event of Auschwitz grounds a new categorical imperative to prevent any comparable event from recurring; for Levinas, this event similarly poses a summons to an unconditional obligation toward the Other. In effect, theodicy is the archetype of the perspective of the Same or identity that attempts to assimilate all alterity, thus dominating the Other or the non-identical. To reject theodicy is to refuse reconciliation with an unjust present—this being the very meaning of the "critical" outlook (whether critical phenomenology or critical theory), I claim—and instead opening a horizon of anticipation for a redemptive future.

In section three, I consider the ways in which both Levinas and Adorno take the standpoint of this redemptive future to be the necessary condition of possibility for a critical engagement with present injustice. Without offering any positive conception of such a future, this standpoint nevertheless shines a negative light through which we may see the manifold ways in which the current state of affairs falls short. For Levinas, it is only an eschatology of messianic peace that can break through and thereby expose the totality of war—under which is included all forms of violence and oppression. The messianic promise exerts its ethical force not through an awaiting of its final fulfilment, but rather in the call it issues here and now to come to the aid of the Other. For Adorno, only the light of redemption (whose full meaning must await clarification below) can properly illuminate the world—with all its evil, depravity, and so on—such that it might be investigated by the critical theorist. This light offers a unique kind of critical phenomenological "seeing," allowing phenomena to appear in a way that reveals their implication in all manners of unjustifiable suffering. For both Levinas and Adorno, such seeing is simultaneously the simplest and the most difficult. The simplest, since there is perhaps nothing more evident than the immense suffering which engulfs the world, and the immense distance this world therefore stands from any possible or impossible redemption. The most difficult, since our very efforts to understand the world in the light of redemption are themselves a part of the unredeemed world—a fact with which any critical eschatology must itself critically reveal and understand. The productive tension between these two conditions, I would argue, inevitably shapes the practice of contemporary critical phenomenology. It is my hope that the close reading of Levinas and Adorno in what follows will prove helpful in navigating this tension in critical phenomenological work today.

## I. LEVINAS AND ADORNO'S NEGATIVE ETHICS

In this section, I examine and compare Levinas's account of our fundamental ethical responsibilities to the Other in *Totality and Infinity* with Adorno's account of our fundamental ethical responsibilities towards the non-identical in *Negative Dialectics*.[5] Both exhibit what I will call—for reasons that will become clear—a "negative ethics," which comes to serve as the ethical basis for a critical eschatology.

### I.I LEVINAS: AN ETHICS OF THE OTHER

In Levinas's (1969) *Totality and Infinity*, the two titular concepts are first presented in terms of war and peace. Totality manifests in and as war, where individuals are reduced by force to serving functions within totalizing systems, compelled to carry out actions in which they do not recognize themselves and through which all higher values are annulled (21-22). In war, as in any totality, nothing is permitted to remain exterior: everything is violently reduced to the domination of the Same. Philosophy encounters Being in the form of war and, for that reason, totality is the dominant form of philosophical thought. The totality of war, Levinas maintains, can be overcome only through "the eschatology of messianic peace," whose truth exceeds philosophical evidences (Levinas 1969, 22). We will have to wait until section three to determine the precise contours of Levinas's messianism. But suffice it to say for the moment that the promise of peace shines forth in the transcendence of the face of *the Other*, which Levinas expresses with the notion of *infinity*. The Other qua infinite overflows any thought that attempts to think it: the Other is irreducible to the Same, and so forever exceeds the grasp of philosophical or conceptual totalities. Of course, the forces of totalization nonetheless perpetually attempt to forcibly reduce the Other to the Same, from which attempts emerge all forms of oppression, domination, subjugation, and so on—"war," in a word (Levinas 1969, 21-30).

For Levinas, *ethics* denotes our responsibility towards the Other in light of the threats of such totalizations: in short, we are responsible for respecting the Other *as infinitely other*, and for alleviating those conditions in which the Other is not respected as such—a task that is itself *infinite*. Levinas (1969) raises ethics to the status of "first philosophy" (42-48, 302-04), a gesture he takes to be unique in the history of philosophy generally, but particularly within phenomenology, which (on Levinas's account) privileged the theoretical over the practical in its classical forms. Nevertheless, Levinas sees in (Husserlian transcendental) phenomenology a certain invaluable openness to transcendence and exteriority, which he will come to recognize for the first time as ultimately that of the Other (28-29). Levinas's phenomenological ethics can be construed as "negative" in the precise sense of negative

[5] Though the choice of these two texts is somewhat arbitrary, they each strike me as the single most powerful and comprehensive articulation of their authors' positions and views available. Interestingly, *Totality and Infinity* and *Negative Dialectics* were both originally published within a span of five years in the 1960s (1961 and 1966, respectively), after each of their authors had already enjoyed long careers—Levinas was in his mid-fifties, Adorno in his early sixties.

theology, his occasional protests to the contrary notwithstanding. Levinas analogizes the Other both to the Cartesian God (the referent of Descartes's idea of infinity) and to the Platonic "Good beyond Being," which through Neoplatonism becomes the basis for the negative (apophatic) theological tradition of the Middle Ages and beyond (Levinas 1969, 25, 79-81, 102-05; Descartes 1996; Plato 2003, 508a-e).[6] Who or what the Other "is" cannot be positively specified (for the Other exceeds Being itself), nor can our duties towards the Other be given any complete or systematic positive elaboration: we can only ethically *encounter* the Other in the phenomenological revelation of the face, in which the Other's very presence is marked by an indelible absence qua transcendence.

## I.II ADORNO: LENDING A VOICE TO SUFFERING

In Adorno's (1973) *Negative Dialectics*, the titular negativity is first presented in terms of the relation between identity and non-identity. For Adorno, philosophical thought as such is identity-thinking: the systematic effort to reduce all reality to the terms of its own conceptual identities. Yet the non-identical forever exceeds any and every attempt to exhaustively systematize or conceptualize it. When identity-thinking runs up against the limitations of its own efforts to grasp the non-identical, it falls into dialectical contradictions. It is the project of negative dialectics to rigorously uncover these contradictions without providing any positive resolution to them—for to do so would be to relapse into identity-thinking. Compelling non-identity to conform to identity is the form of all oppression, domination, subjugation, and so on. Negative dialectics, if it is anything, is the struggle against this conformity and compulsion (4-11). Adorno offers a related schema of subject and object to get at much the same point: identity-thinking qua philosophical thinking has historically privileged the subject over the object, whereby the object is compelled to conform to the systematic conceptualizations and identifications of the philosopher's subjectivity. Against this, Adorno proposes a new priority of the *object*: the object, as the non-identical, exceeds every effort to exhaustively subjectify it. The object "objects" to such subjectification (174-92).

The ethical thrust of Adorno's negative dialectics is given one of its most powerful formulations with reference to the relation between subjectivity and objectivity: "The need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition of all truth. For suffering is objectivity that weighs upon the subject; its most subjective experience, its expression, is objectively conveyed" (1973, 17-18). Critical theory (which I take to be synonymous with negative dialectics in the present context, this being Adorno's chosen name for his own particular practice or brand of critical theory) is precisely an effort to lend a voice to suffering, and only on this condition does critical theory possess any measure of truth. Of course, lending a voice to suffering is in service of the struggle to *eliminate* such suffering. Following Adorno's conception of the subject-object relation, the voice lent to suffering must always be unfinished, fallible, and so on. The objectivity weighing on the subject as suffering itself exceeds any complete

[6] For work on Levinas and negative theology, see Fagenblat (2008) and Wolosky (2017).

conceptualization or identification, requiring the negativity of negative dialectics to be given proper expression. In other words, "[negative] dialectics is the ontology of the wrong state of things": this is an *ethical* project insofar as it is in service of bringing about the *right* of state of things (Adorno 1973, 11). Once again, this project is *negative* insofar as the right state of things cannot be given a positive description in the midst of the wrong state in which we live.[7]

## I.III LEVINAS AND ADORNO: TOWARDS A CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL ETHICS

Levinas and Adorno already seem to agree, strikingly, on a number of points. For both Levinas and Adorno, our ethical responsibilities are directed towards that which exceeds philosophical or conceptual totalization or identification: the Other and the non-identical, respectively. Notice that in both cases this excess is a matter of alterity or difference: non-identity is what is *other* with respect to identity, while the Other is what is *non-identical* with respect to the Same. Again, in both cases, oppression and domination arise from the attempted forcible reduction of this alterity: the reduction of the Other to the Same, and of non-identity to identity. Our responsibility is accordingly to resist this reduction: to respect the Other *as other* and the non-identical *as non-identical*, and to struggle against conditions in which they are not so respected. These tasks are *negative* insofar as the irreducible alterity of the Other and the non-identical—and, by extension, our duties towards them—cannot be given an exhaustive positive description. As Adorno (1973) evocatively writes: "Materialism brought [the theological ban on graven images] into secular form by not permitting Utopia to be positively pictured; this is the substance of its negativity. At its most materialistic, materialism [i.e., Adorno's critical theory] comes to agree with theology" (207).[8] As it turns out, the ban on graven images is equally *Levinas's* stance towards the Other, whose reduction to the Same would be the form of all idolatry; this is the substance of the negativity of Levinas's negative theology (see Levinas 1969, 294-98). At the risk of an overstatement we might say that, at its most critical, Adorno's critical theory comes to agree with Levinas's phenomenology.

So, how might this agreement between Adorno's critical theory and Levinas's phenomenology contribute to the project of a critical phenomenology? On the one hand, Adorno's critical call to lend a voice to suffering can be given a distinctively phenomenological bent. A critical phenomenology of suffering would strive to give voice to the weight of objectivity on the subject, as the most subjective experience of the objective conditions of oppression and domination. The tools of phenomenological description seem better suited than any to giving voice to these experiences *qua experiences*, insofar as such description is,

[7] For work on the "negativity" of Adorno's ethics, see Bernstein (2001) and Freyenhagen (2013).

[8] For a book-length account of Adorno and the "ban on images," see Truskolaski (2020).

I claim, the most attuned to the intricacies of experience as such.[9] On the other hand, Levinas's phenomenological account of the face of the Other may supply an invaluable experiential ethical grounding to Adorno's critical theory. A critical phenomenology open to the ethical encounter with the Other could profoundly witness and testify to the countless ways in which this openness is systematically blocked, obstructed, and so on. Of course, what I ultimately want to suggest is that a critical phenomenological *eschatology* stands as the most promising point of mutual illumination and enrichment between Levinas and Adorno. We have already seen that Levinas takes the respect for the Other to underwrite a vision of messianic peace, and that Adorno takes the respect for the non-identical to herald the "right" state of things—a "utopia" that cannot be positively pictured. But before we can get to the details of this critical eschatology, we might first consider a concrete case of its opposite: namely, the oppression or domination of the Other and the non-identical, and the totalizing philosophical outlook that fails to properly respond to this condition.

## II. LEVINAS AND ADORNO CONTRA THEODICY

In the previous section, I examined the "negative ethics" of the Other and the non-identical at play in Levinas and Adorno. In this section, I take up the challenges to the classical philosophical project of theodicy that follows from this ethics, with specific historical reference to the Holocaust (or Auschwitz, by metonymy, as per Adorno's usage), which bore particular biographical significance for both Levinas and Adorno. As we will eventually see, it is their rejection of theodicy that will come to open the horizon of redemptive futurity constitutive of a critical eschatology.[10]

### II.I LEVINAS AGAINST "USELESS SUFFERING"

Levinas was born in 1906 to a Jewish family in Lithuania, moving to France as a young man to undertake his philosophical studies. He served in the French military during the Second World War, spending most of the war as a prisoner-of-war in Germany, where his POW status protected him from the Holocaust's death camps. Maurice Blanchot managed to shelter Levinas's wife and daughter (who had also been living in France) in a monastery, but the members of Levinas's family that had remained in Lithuania were not so fortunate: they were deported to the camps or killed by the SS (Malka 2006). The French dedication

[9] Here contemporary work in critical phenomenology on *witnessing* and *testimony* as ways of "giving voice" to experiences of suffering and oppression is crucially important: see Oliver (2001, 202) and Stauffer (2018).

[10] Here again I am indebted to Eisenstadt (2006), Sachs (2011), and Portella (2019) for their accounts of Levinas and Adorno's responses to the Holocaust. Each of these accounts chooses to favor either Levinas or Adorno as providing the more valuable or profound response. I have left such a choice in suspension here.

to Levinas's (1998b) second masterwork *Otherwise than Being* reads: "To the memory of those who were closest among the six million assassinated by the National Socialists, and of the millions on millions of all confessions and all nations, victims of the same hatred of the other man, the same anti-semitism"—the Hebrew dedication then gives the names of Levinas's family members who perished (vii). Though Levinas offers many different reflections on these events over the course of his career, some of the most potent are contained in his essay "Useless Suffering":

> Perhaps the most revolutionary fact of our twentieth-century consciousness . . . is that of the destruction of all balance between Western thought's explicit and implicit theodicy and the forms that suffering and its evil are taking on in the very unfolding of this century. This is the century that in thirty years has known two world wars, the totalitarianisms of right and left, Hitlerism and Stalinism, Hiroshima, the Gulag, and the genocides of Auschwitz and Cambodia. This is the century that is drawing to a close in the obsessive fear of the return of everything these barbaric names stood for: suffering and evil inflicted deliberately, but in a manner no reason sets limits to, in the exasperation of a reason become political and detached from all ethics. Among these events the Holocaust of the Jewish people under the reign of Hitler seems to me the paradigm of gratuitous human suffering, in which evil appears in its diabolical horror. . . . The disproportion between suffering and every theodicy was shown at Auschwitz with a glaring, obvious clarity. (1998a, 97)

Let us try to unpack this passage. "Theodicy" was first coined by G. W. Leibniz (1990) to denote the effort to justify the ways of God to humanity—in particular, to explain the existence of evil and suffering in the world in such a way that would render it compatible with God's perfect goodness and justice. Though Leibniz may have introduced the term, Levinas rightly sees the theodicean impulse as characteristic of the entirety of the Western tradition from Plato to Hegel. Leibniz himself argued that, since God is all-good, this world must be the best of all possible worlds: whatever apparently unjustified evil or suffering we may encounter is in fact "for the best," since God's goodness requires that this world is the best possible. All evil and suffering must be in the service of God's higher purposes, even if we cannot understand them.

For Levinas, the historical catastrophes of the 20th century have rendered any such project of theodicy radically untenable and unconscionable. To attempt to justify the horrors of the Holocaust by appeal to a "higher purpose" would be a desecration of the memory of the victims; no purported justification could ever be proportionate to the suffering endured. The search for such justifications manifests the classical philosophical domination of the Same and of totality; all evil and suffering can be justified (so the philosopher of the Same declares) once it is understood in terms of its place in a totalizing system, which lends it a higher systematic purpose or meaning. But this precisely neglects the dimension of the *Other*, and above all the *suffering* of the Other. For Levinas, the desire to justify the suffering of the Other is itself the beginning of all evil. The proper ethical response to suffering is

not to *justify* it, but to strive to *eliminate* it. Indeed, it is in the very essence of the suffering of the Other to be thoroughly "useless," and thus lacking in any sufficient justification (Levinas 1998a, 91-94). Our witness to the terrifying suffering of the 20th century—an utterly "gratuitous" suffering, a suffering beyond all reason and all limits—calls us to our responsibility towards the Other, and to the struggle to end the Other's ongoing suffering. This call, we will see, is ultimately the eschatological call of messianic peace: a peace that would spell the end of useless suffering.

## II.II ADORNO AGAINST "RECONCILIATION"

Adorno was born in 1903 to a Jewish family in Germany, beginning his academic career in the 1920s. By the 1930s, in light of the rise of Nazism, Adorno fled to England in exile, and subsequently to the United States. In 1949 he would return to Germany, where he lived out the rest of his life (Müller-Doohm 2009). Adorno never ceased in his efforts to come to grips with the catastrophes that had transpired in the country and continent of his birth. Indeed, he never ceased in his efforts to search for what it would *mean* to "come to grips" with catastrophes that were in their very essence unimaginable and unthinkable. Adorno (1973) maintained that it certainly could *not* mean extracting a positive meaning or "sense" from the events that would purportedly "reconcile" us to them:

> After Auschwitz, our feelings resist any claim of the positivity of existence as sanctimonious, as wronging the victims; they balk at squeezing any kind of sense, however bleached, out of the victims' fate. . . . The earthquake of Lisbon sufficed to cure Voltaire of the theodicy of Leibniz, and the visible disaster of the first nature was insignificant in comparison with the second, social one, which defies human imagination as it distills a real hell from human evil. Our metaphysical faculty is paralyzed because actual events have shattered the basis on which speculative metaphysical thought could be reconciled with experience. (361-62)

No doubt the references to "speculative thought" and "reconciliation" here are directed primarily to Hegel (1975), who described his own philosophy of history (the historical unfolding of Spirit qua "second nature") as a "theodicy" in the Leibnizian sense (42-43). For Hegel, history is a "slaughter-bench" on which individuals and nations are sacrificed for the sake of the march of Reason through history; when the philosopher comprehends the justified necessity of these historical sacrifices, they become reconciled to them (69). For Adorno, Auschwitz marks the definitive repudiation of any such account of history. To attempt to justify the real Hell of Auschwitz with reference to historical necessity, "squeezing" some perverse meaning out of it, would be to infinitely defile and wrong the memory of the victims.

In effect, such a historical theodicy amounts to the domination of the non-identical by identity: whatever does not or cannot conform to the systematic rational necessity of the historical process can be justifiably sacrificed. Negative dialectics must lend a voice to the

suffering that such domination invariably produces, as much as to the historical suffering that paralyzes our metaphysical faculties. Indeed, it is the suffering and disasters of history that impose on us an ethical obligation to struggle against all such suffering:

> A new categorical imperative has been imposed by Hitler upon unfree mankind: to arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen. When we want to find reasons for it, this imperative is as refractory as the given one of Kant was once upon a time. Dealing discursively with it would be an outrage, for the new imperative gives us a bodily sensation of the moral addendum—bodily, because it is now the practical abhorrence of the unbearable physical agony to which individuals are exposed even with individuality about to vanish as a form of mental reflection. It is in the unvarnished materialistic motive only that morality survives. (Adorno 1973, 365)

The bodily sensation of unbearable physical agony, not any transcendental deduction via pure practical reason, is now the materialist basis for morality, on Adorno's view. Here is another way in which materialism and theology coincide:

> At its most materialistic, materialism comes to agree with theology. Its great desire would be the resurrection of the flesh, a desire utterly foreign to idealism, the realm of absolute spirit. . . . Only if the physical urge were quenched would the spirit be reconciled and would become that which it only promises while the spell of material conditions will not let it satisfy material needs. (Adorno 1973, 207).

True reconciliation is achieved not, as Hegel believed, when we come to affirm the horrors of history as justified necessities and sacrifices. Rather, it is only through the *refusal* of any such affirmation, which alone can guide us toward the "resurrection of the flesh" (foreign to idealism and absolute spirit, i.e., to Hegelianism): the satisfaction of our material needs and the defeat of all abhorrent bodily agony. Only with this future resurrection and redemption could we be *truly* reconciled (with ourselves, with each other, and with the world).

## II.III LEVINAS AND ADORNO: TOWARDS A REDEMPTIVE FUTURITY

Once again, the points of agreement between Levinas and Adorno are striking. Both repudiate theodicy as wronging the victims of historical injustices, recognizing the historical catastrophes of the 20th century as definitively delivering this repudiation. Both reject the classical philosophical project of rationally justifying past suffering, in favour of the ethical project of alleviating present suffering. The very horrors of history that defy imagination call us to our responsibilities towards the Other (our "categorical imperative"), and to the difficult labour of working towards a redeemed future in which the suffering and agony of the Other would be no more (an eschatological "resurrection"). The political, economic, and social world in which we live remains the very world that allowed and produced these

horrors, and which continues to produce them (in an occasionally less obvious fashion) in countless ways. Our responsibility is not to explain them away as necessary means to a higher end, but to ceaselessly struggle against the conditions of their continued production and reproduction.

In a sense, this is what I take *critical* to mean, whether with reference to critical theory or critical phenomenology: the refusal of reconciliation with an unjust present, the refusal of justification for the suffering of others, the refusal of all conditions in which the Other is debased, degraded, or destroyed.[11] Both Levinas and Adorno exemplify this critical outlook. A critical phenomenology premised on a cooperation of insights from Levinas and Adorno would evince this same outlook twofold, insofar as it brings these two thinkers together.[12] But how would such a critical phenomenology approach the phenomena under its investigation, given its criticality? Would it be simply "negative" in a narrow sense? Of course, it would be affirmative insofar as it labours in the service of justice, of goodness, and of a better world in a better future. Indeed, as we will see, both Levinas and Adorno maintain that it is precisely from the perspective of this redemptive futurity that past and present unjustifiable suffering can be seen in the proper light, so as to engage in the critical struggle towards this redeemed future—a future that can only be conceived "negatively," insofar as our unredeemed present (and its "ban on images") precludes the positive construction of the "right state of things." This light is the "light of redemption," and the critical approach it engenders is a critical eschatology.

## III. LEVINAS AND ADORNO ON THE LIGHT OF REDEMPTION

In section one, we examined Levinas's and Adorno's basic ethical positions concerning responsibility towards the Other and the non-identical, including the need to lend a voice to suffering. In section two, we saw how these ethical positions related to the historical events of Levinas and Adorno's own times: a rejection of theodicy qua rational justification for unjustifiable human suffering, and a concomitant commitment to the struggle for a

[11] For reflections on the notion of "critique" in contemporary critical phenomenology, see Salamon (2018a) and Guenther (2020). Guenther explains the political practice of critical phenomenology with particular clarity and force: "As a political practice, critical phenomenology is a struggle for liberation from the structures that privilege, naturalize, and normalize certain experiences of the world while marginalizing, pathologizing, and discrediting others. These structures exist on many levels: social, political, economic, psychological, epistemological, and even ontological. . . . As a transformative political practice, critical phenomenology must be beyond a description of oppression, developing concrete strategies for dismantling oppressive structures and creating or amplifying different, less oppressive, and more liberatory ways of Being-in-the-world. In other words, the ultimate goal of critical phenomenology is not just to interpret the world, but also to change it" (15-16).

[12] One might think that Adorno's emphasis on the materiality of *bodily* suffering would be incompatible with Levinas's phenomenology, but in fact Levinas is a powerful phenomenological thinker of embodiment (see Meskin 1993 and Guenther 2012).

redeemed future in which such suffering would be eliminated. In this section (three), I explore the methods by which Levinas's phenomenology and Adorno's critical theory approach their objects of investigation, in light of the foregoing exposition. Both Levinas's "messianic peace" and Adorno's "messianic light"—i.e., the "light of redemption"—allow us to see and investigate the evils and injustices of the world with the critical eye necessary to work towards a *better* world, which might form the basis for a critical eschatology.

## III.I LEVINAS'S MESSIANIC PEACE

In the preface to *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas (1969) identifies the standpoint of totality and the Same with *war,* and the opposing standpoint of infinity and the Other with *peace*. With those identifications in mind, Levinas offers his most direct and powerful account of their relationship and their import for his own phenomenological project in eschatological terms, which we will proceed to unpack in detail:

> Morality will . . . proclaim itself unconditional and universal when the eschatology of messianic peace will have come to superpose itself upon the ontology of war. Philosophers distrust it. . . . [F]or them eschatology—a subjective and arbitrary divination of the future, the result of a revelation without evidences, tributary of faith—belongs naturally to Opinion. . . . But, when reduced to the evidences, eschatology would then already accept the ontology of totality issued from war. Its real import lies elsewhere. It does not introduce a teleological system into the totality; it does not consist in teaching the orientation of history. Eschatology institutes a relation with being *beyond the totality* or beyond history, and not with being beyond the past and the present. . . . It is a relationship with *a surplus always exterior to the totality*, as though the objective totality did not fill out the true measure of being, as though another concept, the concept of *infinity*, were needed to express this transcendence with regard to totality, non-encompassable within a totality and as primordial as totality. This "beyond" the totality and objective experience is, however, not to be described in a purely negative fashion. It is reflected *within* the totality and history, *within* experience. The eschatological, as the "beyond" of history, draws beings out of the jurisdiction of history and the future; it arouses them in and calls them forth to their full responsibility. . . . It does not envisage the end of history within being understood as a totality, but institutes a relation with the infinity of being which exceeds the totality. . . . Without substituting eschatology for philosophy, without philosophically "demonstrating" eschatological truths, we can proceed from the experience of totality back to a situation where totality breaks up, a situation that conditions the totality itself. Such a situation is the gleam of exteriority or of transcendence in the face of the Other. (22-24)

Let us try to make sense of this passage. Levinas maintains that the eschatology of messianic peace must come to "superpose itself" onto war. But what precisely does this superposition amount to? Traditionally, eschatology refers to divinely-revealed predictions or prophecies regarding the future eschaton or "end times," in which history would be brought to an end by God's final judgment; philosophers of the Same naturally distrust such predictions (insofar as prophecy and revelation are taken to be non-philosophical), treating them as matters of faith or opinion rather than of philosophical truth. But for Levinas, the true significance of eschatology is not a matter of predicting any such definitive future. The superposition of messianic peace onto the ontology of war emphatically does *not* amount to the determination of a teleological end to history qua totality. (Such a determination would have to be supported by various evidences, the necessity of which would be tantamount to a capitulation to war and the Same). Rather, it requires the institution of a relation *beyond* totality and history, which is nevertheless reflected *within* totality and history—namely, *infinity*. No totality can ever "fill out" the whole of reality; there is always an excess of the infinite that escapes it, and which, when reflected within it, can allow us to break up and break down the totality in question. In other words, the true meaning of the messianic future described in eschatology is the call it issues to us *here and now* to take up our ethical responsibilities, drawing us out of the domination of totality and the Same towards the infinity of the Other.

Indeed, though the infinite exceeds experience, it is equally reflected within experience, precisely in "the gleam of exteriority or transcendence in the face of the Other." It is the gleaming light of this transcendent face of the Other that shines on totality, revealing its conditionality and sites of breakdown. This light is the infinite messianic light: the light of the eschatology of messianic peace. Though this light shines from beyond our experience (the Other is *transcendent*), it illuminates our experience in a certain way. Specifically, it illuminates the totality of war (domination, oppression, etc.) in the service of the possibility of future peace: a peace in the name of which we take up the present ethical struggle against war in all its forms. Levinasian phenomenology is precisely a phenomenological account of experiences as illuminated by this light. Its eschatology does not guarantee a future messianic era "beyond" history, but rather institutes a redemptive futural orientation within history and experience—the opening of history itself to new and unknown futures. Such an orientation rouses us to identify and understand the totalities that besiege us, and break them up in the service of and out of our responsibility for the Other.

## III.II ADORNO'S LIGHT OF REDEMPTION

Adorno's (2005) most powerful account of the "light of redemption" comes in the "Finale" to *Minima Moralia*, which I quote in full:

> The only philosophy which can be responsibly practised in face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption. Knowledge has no light but that shed on the world by redemption: all else is

> reconstruction, mere technique. Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light. To gain such perspectives without velleity or violence, entirely from felt contact with its objects—this alone is the task of thought. It is the simplest of all things, because the situation calls imperatively for such knowledge, indeed because consummate negativity, once squarely faced, delineates the mirror-image of its opposite. But it is also the utterly impossible thing, because it presupposes a standpoint removed, even though by a hair's breadth, from the scope of existence, whereas we well know that any possible knowledge must not only be first wrested from what is, if it shall hold good, but is also marked, for this very reason, by the same distortion and indigence which it seeks to escape. The more passionately thought denies its conditionality for the sake of the unconditional, the more unconsciously, and so calamitously, it is delivered up to the world. Even its own impossibility it must at last comprehend for the sake of the possible. But beside the demand thus placed on thought, the question of the reality or unreality of redemption itself hardly matters. (Adorno 2005, 247)[13]

For Adorno, only a philosophy that would contemplate all things from the standpoint of redemption could be practised responsibly in our present despairing condition; a philosophy that dismissed this standpoint by denying the project of alleviating the despair of the world could not be responsibly practiced. But what precisely is entailed by this contemplation from the standpoint of redemption? Redemption sheds a certain light on the world, which Adorno takes to be necessary for any knowledge about the world. This knowledge offers perspectives that render the world displaced and estranged by revealing a certain indigence and distortion therein (domination, oppression, injustice, etc.). Such distortion ("distorted" relative to the transparent clarity of a redeemed world) would be visible only under the illumination of the messianic light, i.e., only in an imagined retrospection from the standpoint of a future redemption that would be free from these same qualities. The world needs this light, for it is itself a world of darkness qua suffering, despair, and so on; the suffering world seen only in its own darkness would fail to recognize the depths of its own despair. In other words, it is only from the perspective of a *better* world (even if only conceived negatively) that we can understand the shortcomings of the present one. The task of thought is to acquire such displacing and estranging perspectives from "felt contact" with the "rifts and crevices" of the objects of examination—a task that is simultaneously profoundly simple and impossible. It is simple because the despair of our condition is so blatant and total that its opposite (redemption) is equally clear, if only negatively. It is impossible because the very knowledge fashioned in the light of redemption would itself be marked by the manifold imperfections of the unredeemed world in which it is fashioned. Critical theory (to give

[13] For a helpful contemporary discussion of this passage and similar ones throughout Adorno's corpus, see Truskolaski (2020, 94-104).

this knowledge a name) must also criticize *itself* and its own complicity in the suffering of the world, for the sake of the "possible"—that is, for the sake of the possibility of a future redemption, in whose light critical theory itself sees what it sees.[14]

The final sentence of the "Finale" is remarkable: "But beside the demand thus placed on thought, the question of the reality or unreality of redemption itself hardly matters" (Adorno 2005, 247). It is not the reality or the unreality of redemption that Adorno cares most about, but rather the *demand* placed on thought by the very standpoint of redemption and its messianic light. This is fundamentally an *ethical* demand, a moral imperative to see the world in the light of redemption—whether or not we may in fact ever be redeemed, whether or not any such thing is truly conceivable. The *futural* orientation of the standpoint of redemption nonetheless demands that we confront the despair of the *present*, the here and now, on which the messianic light shines. It is to present suffering that we must lend a voice, for the sake of a better future.

## III.III LEVINAS AND ADORNO: TOWARDS A CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL ESCHATOLOGY

The commonalities between Levinas and Adorno on the interconnected thematics of eschatology, the messianic, and redemption are deep and profound. For both Levinas and Adorno, the standpoint of a redemptive future (messianic peace or redemption) shines a necessary light on the present, illuminating it for phenomenological or critical analysis. The possibilities for a critical phenomenology on this basis seem to me especially promising. The illumination afforded by the light of redemption is precisely an illumination of the phenomena to be investigated by the critical phenomenologist who takes up the standpoint of redemption to perform such an investigation. The particular way of "seeing" in this light is a particular critical phenomenological mode of observation and description, attuned precisely to phenomena of oppression, domination, injustice, evil, and so on. Adorno's call to displace and estrange the world by intimately attending to its rifts and crevices has a clear phenomenological valence; Levinas's phenomenology no less enjoins this critical stance, and offers an array of phenomenological tools to make good on it. Insofar as the critical phenomenology practiced in the light of redemption refers to an eschatological future, we can call it a critical phenomenological eschatology, or simply critical eschatology.

Following both Levinas and Adorno, such a critical eschatology must be ready to subject itself to its own critique. For Levinas, the infinite which stands beyond totality must nonetheless reflect itself *within* totality, and only by so doing can it draw us to the point at which totality breaks down; our efforts in this regard, being forever finite and fallible, may always fall prey to the totalities in which they must be reflected. For Adorno, critique is conditioned by the damaged world at which it is aimed, and is thus marked by the very

[14] An exemplary contemporary instance of this self-critique at work in critical theory would be Allen (2017), which is helpfully held up as a model for critical phenomenology in Salamon (2018a).

imperfections it theorizes. This is not a defeatism on either Levinas's or Adorno's part, but rather a demand that we redouble our critical efforts, never succumbing to the contentment of "good conscience" at having ostensibly completed our task once and for all. As far as either Levinas or Adorno are concerned (as far as either of them can surmise from the present state of things), the task cannot nor ever will be completed— redemption remains a future always just beyond the horizon, whose very unreachability ensures that the work of critical eschatology will never come to rest. For Levinas, messianic peace is not a final end to history, but a call to our responsibilities towards the Other here and now. For Adorno, the reality or unreality of redemption hardly matters, only the demand it places on us in the present. Again, far from defeatism, this is a redoubling of our critical eschatological efforts, necessary if critical eschatology is to be true to its own cause. As long as the light of redemption shines on our suffering and despair, critical eschatology can and must set to work.

## CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, let us recapitulate the results of the foregoing investigation. For both Levinas and Adorno, our fundamental ethical responsibilities are towards that which exceeds philosophical totalization or systematization (the Other or the non-identical), whose suffering under the domination of totality or systematicity (the Same or identity) we must give voice to and struggle to eliminate. For both Levinas and Adorno, we are obligated to *put an end* to the suffering of others, not to seek a purported philosophical justification for such suffering—as the classical philosophical project of theodicy has sought to do. The historical catastrophes of the 20th century have repudiated theodicy: the memories of the victims—including all those who continue to fall victim to injustice anew every day—instead call us to take up our responsibility to fight against present oppression and domination in favour of a better future. For both Levinas and Adorno, the methodological tool proper to these concerns is the "light of redemption" (the messianic light, the standpoint of redemption or the eschatology of messianic peace). To see all things as they would appear in the light of redemption is to see clearly and distinctly the manifold totalities, structures, and systems of domination, oppression, and injustice in the present world, revealing all the ways in which the present world is utterly distorted and indigent in comparison to a would-be redemptive future. Even if this redemption can only be negatively specified in relation to the despair of the present, even if this redemption may never come, its light still shines—and all the more brightly—for we the unredeemed.

Insofar as Levinas's phenomenology and Adorno's critical theory both take up this eschatological standpoint, they can both be said to evince a certain "critical eschatology" with promising possibilities for critical phenomenology. The task of a critical phenomenological eschatology would be, first of all, to lend a voice to suffering by articulating the experiences of intolerable objective conditions weighing on the subject (in Adorno's terms), or of totalities weighing on the Other (in Levinas's terms). Such critical phenomenological work would be *critical* inasmuch as it steadfastly refuses reconciliation with an unjust present

(Adorno) and any purportedly rational justification for the useless suffering that our world produces and re-produces (Levinas). The light of redemption illuminates phenomena for critical phenomenological analysis oriented at its most fundamental level towards a critique of the present and the struggle for a more ethical, more just, more flourishing future for us all.[15] Of course, this comparison between Levinas and Adorno has only just scratched the surface of a critical phenomenology of this kind; I take myself only to have laid the groundwork for further research in this regard by drawing attention to certain points of mutual agreement or resonance between the two. Further work would also be needed to explore the various crucial and productive differences between Levinas and Adorno in greater detail; I have only emphasized their similarities for the sake of making particularly salient the possibilities for mutual illumination and enrichment between these two epochal thinkers.

•

As a coda of sorts, I give the final enigmatic words to two *other* thinkers of our unredeemed condition and of a messianic redemption. First, to Walter Benjamin (1969):

> Our image of happiness is indissolubly bound up with the image of redemption. The same applies to our view of the past, which is the concern of history. The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply. (254)

Second, to the always paradoxical Franz Kafka (1958): "The Messiah will come only when he is no longer necessary; he will come only on the day after his arrival" (80-81).

## REFERENCES

Adorno, Theodor W. 1973. *Negative Dialectics.* Translated by E. B. Ashton. New York: The Seabury Press.

———. 2003. *The Jargon of Authenticity*. Translated by Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will. London and New York: Routledge.

———. 2005. *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life.* Translated by E. F. N. Jephcott. London and New York: Verso.

[15] Some contemporary critical phenomenological studies that seem to me to exemplify this approach (whether implicitly or explicitly to varying degrees) include Guenther (2013) and Salamon (2018b).

———. 2013. *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique.* Translated by Willis Domingo. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Allen, Amy. 2017. *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Belmer, Stephanie. 2019. "Emmanuel Levinas and Theodor Adorno on Ethics and Aesthetics." *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 24 (5): 29–43.

Benjamin, Walter. 1969. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." In *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Schoken Books.

de Vries, Hent. 2005. *Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Adorno and Levinas*. Translated by Geoffrey Hale. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Bernstein, J. M. 2001. *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Descartes, René. 1996. *Meditations on First Philosophy, with Selections from the Objections and Replies*. Translated and edited by John Cottingham. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eisenstadt, Oona. 2006. "Levinas and Adorno: Universalizing the Jew After Auschwitz." *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 14 (1–2): 131–51.

Fagenblat, Michael. 2008. "Levinas and Maimonides: From Metaphysics to Ethical Negative Theology." *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 16 (1): 95–147.

Freyenhagen, Fabian. 2013. *Adorno's Practical Philosophy: Living Less Wrongly.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gordon, Peter. 2016. *Adorno and Existence*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.

Guenther, Lisa. 2012. *The Gift of the Other: Levinas and the Politics of Reproduction*. Albany: SUNY Press.

———. 2013. *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and Its Afterlives.* Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

———. 2020. "Critical Phenomenology." In *50 Concepts for a Critical* Phenomenology*, edited by Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon, 11–16. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Hegel, G. W. F. 1975. *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Introduction: Reason in History*. Translated by H. S. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kafka, Franz. 1958. *Parables and Paradoxes*. Edited by Nahum N. Glatzer. New York: Schocken Books.

Leibniz, Gottfried.1990. *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*. Edited by Austin Farrer. Translated by E. M. Huggard. Chicago: Open Court.

Levinas, Emmanuel. 1969. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

———. 1995. *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*. Translated by André Orianne. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

———. 1998a. *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*. Translated by Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav. New York: Columbia University Press.

———. 1998b. *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence.* Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

———. 1998c. *Discovering Existence with Husserl*. Translated by Richard A. Cohen and Michael B. Smith. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Malka, Salomon. 2006. *Emmanuel Levinas: His Life and Legacy.* Translated by Michael Kigel and Sonja M. Embree. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Meskin, Jacob. 1993. "In the Flesh: Embodiment and Jewish Existence in the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas." *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 76 (1): 173–90.

Müller-Doohm, Stefan. 2009. *Adorno: A Biography*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Nelson, Eric S. 2020. *Levinas, Adorno, and the Ethics of the Material Other*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Oliver, Kelly. 2001. *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

———. 2020. "Witnessing." In *50 Concepts for a Critical* Phenomenology*, edited by Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon, 337–42. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Plato. 2003. *The Republic*. Translated by Tom Griffith. Edited by G. R. F. Ferrari. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Portella, Elizabeth. 2019. "Mediation and Its Shadow: Ethics and Politics in Selected Works of Levinas and Adorno." *Philosophy Today* 63 (2): 427–45.

Saches, Carl B. 2011. "The acknowledgement of transcendence: Anti-theodicy in Adorno and Levinas." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 37 (3): 273–94.

Salamon, Gayle. 2018a. "What's Critical about Critical Phenomenology?" *Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology* 1: 8-17.

———. 2018b. *The Life and Death of Latisha King: A Critical Phenomenology of Transphobia.* New York: NYU Press.

Smith, Nick. 2006. "Adorno vs. Levinas: Evaluating Points of Contention." *Continental Philosophy Review* 40: 275–306.

Stauffer, Jill. 2018. *Ethical Loneliness: The Injustice of Not Being Heard*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Truskolaski, Sebastian. 2020. *Adorno and the Ban on Images*. London: Bloomsbury.

Wolosky, Shira. 2017. "Two Types of Negative Theology; Or, What Does Negative Theology Negate?" In *Negative Theology as Jewish Modernity,* edited by Michael Fagenblat, 161–79. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

**PUNCTA**
*Journal of Critical Phenomenology*

# ON THE SOURCES OF CRITIQUE IN HEIDEGGER AND DERRIDA

MATTHIAS FRITSCH*
*Concordia University*

## I. ONTOLOGICAL AND NORMATIVE DIMENSIONS IN CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY

According to Lisa Guenther's (2020) concise account, critical phenomenology seeks to expose not only the transcendental conditions of seeing and making the world (such as subjectivity, embodiment, and temporality), but the "quasi-transcendental" ones we find in contingent historical and social structures, such as white supremacy, patriarchy, and heteronormativity (12). This excellent formulation raises the question of its central distinction: from what position would the critical phenomenologist be able to distinguish transcendental from quasi-transcendental conditions, or universal from contingent structures? This question recalls post-Heideggerian treatments of transcendental historicity (Crowell & Malpas 2007) and the possibilities of critical theorizing, e.g., the Habermas-Gadamer debate on lifeworld and critique (How 1995). These issues also remind us of earlier attempts to forge alliances between (post-)phenomenology and critical theory by scholars shuttling between Freiburg (or Paris) and Frankfurt. At times, these went under the label "critical ontology" and often sought to develop a coherent vision out of Western Marxism and phenomenology, with a special focus, it seems, on Theodor Adorno and Martin Heidegger (Dallmayr 1991; Guzzoni 1990; Mörchen 1981; Macdonald & Ziarek 2008).[1]

* This article freely draws from a week-long seminar I gave at the 2019 *Collegium Phaenomenologicum*. For excellent comments and discussion, I thank the participants, the marvelously generous Director Anne O'Byrne, her assistant Adam Blair, as well as two truly engaged anonymous referees. I intend to elaborate the ideas presented here in a monograph, tentatively entitled *Phenomenology and Critique: Outline of a Critical Social Theory and its Sources of Normativity*.

[1] Already in 1991, Dallmayr's *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt* used the label "critical phenomenology" (viii). Associating phenomenology more with Husserl, he meant by it "a blending of French existentialism and Habermasian critical theory" whose "rationalist and Cartesian overtones" he came to reject in favour of a "critical ontology" or "critique-engendering ontology" (ix) that takes to heart Heidegger's and Adorno's problematizations of these overtones (while also drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, and others).

In publishing the following reading of Heidegger and Jacques Derrida in this journal, it is my hope that we can still learn from these attempts. What seems most apt today, perhaps, are the links between Heidegger's critique of technology and the Marxist critique of capitalism, including its inaugurating and ongoing state violence in what Karl Marx called primitive accumulation and colonial dispossession (Marx 1990; Coulthard 2014; Nichols 2020). It may help to note at the outset that below we will present some of Derrida's central moral and political concepts, in particular double affirmation, as both a reading of Heidegger and a "radicalization" of Marxist critique. The primary focus of my remarks here, however, will be on how such critique is possible. For Guenther's formulation of critical phenomenology also raises the issue of the sources of critique: on what grounds can the critical phenomenologist reject certain contingent structures of world-seeing and world-making, and affirm others? Which implicit or explicit visions of world are guiding the attempt to expose some contingent structures as problematic? Accordingly, I will first focus on what allows Heidegger's phenomenological ontology to criticize technological mastery. I will then try to show how Derrida appropriates and transforms Heidegger's account. Finally, I will discuss what this transformation implies for a deconstruction that situates critics in inherited, co-constitutive life world structures from which they cannot fully extricate themselves, but without this historicity prohibiting the projection of revisable visions of a better world.

Such visions, we might say in all brevity here, must address both ontological and normative demands, despite the widespread tendency to regard one as primary. The concern for normative adequacy tends toward a coherent and idealized set of moral beliefs and on justifying norms. By contrast, a primarily ontological approach hearkens back to the older meaning of "ethics" as an abode or dwelling (*ethos*), and insists that moral and political philosophy first and foremost consider, not why and how much we owe according to some principle, but how human beings are constituted in relation to each other and situated in the contexts in which social and terrestrial life occurs.

These two approaches to moral and political theorizing are often at loggerheads, each with its own specific dangers. The danger that comes with stressing normative adequacy (probably the dominant mode of doing political philosophy in the English-speaking world over the last five decades) is to smuggle in an inadequate ontology, e.g., an overly individualist one with an "unencumbered self" (Sandel 1998, xiv, et passim). By contrast, giving priority to ontological considerations may violate the neutrality of a liberal-democratic state regarding what makes human lives meaningful. Further, it may smuggle in normative assumptions without justification, or not help us think about the extent and content of normative structures at all.

For the purposes of this paper, I will assume (without argument) that in our times of wide-spread environmental and political crisis, the ideal normative approach is historically insensitive and tends to be impotent (Mills 2005, 2014; Valentini 2012), so what we need above all is a new "ethical" understanding of who we are and how we inhabit our world in relation to the earth. Putting the matter in this way already admits its affinity with Heidegger's diagnosis of what he terms the age of enframing (the *Gestell*), and its relation to what is now often called the Anthropocene (cf. Borgmann 2020). Heidegger (1976) responds

to the demand for an ethics by first questioning the demand itself, which he suspects stems from a disorientation in the age of technology. Technology, he suggests, asks the human being (surreptitiously, as we will see) to "correspond" to the dictates of the enframing by itself achieving predictable constancy in standing-in-reserve. This calculable constancy is to be achieved by an axiological ethics of rules that he sees as "merely the power-driven machination of reason" (*nur das Gemächte menschlicher Vernunft)* (Heidegger 1976, 361/1998, 274), a reason that misunderstands itself as severed from its immersion in world and in the fourfold disclosure of being. The demand for an ethics further seems to presuppose a problematic division between logic, physics and ethics that Heidegger's phenomenological ontology seeks to overcome. The ancient division helps prepare modern nihilism, which first reduces all physical being to mere matter and blind forces, thereby denying things their own coming forth, and then re-values nature selectively by projecting human values on to it (Farin 1998). This value subjectivism gives rise to the illusion, today perhaps best expressed in the geological notion of the Anthropocene, that wherever they look, human beings encounter only themselves (see Taylor 2003). Nature, however, may precisely conceal its being in the face it offers to "technical appropriation" (*technische Bemächtigung*) (Heidegger 1976, 324/1998, 247).

In response, Heidegger proposes the rethinking of being as itself already, as the by now famous words have it, an "originary ethics" (Heidegger 1976, 356/1998, 271). Heidegger traces this originary ethics back to *Being and Time*'s (1927/2008) determination of the human being as ek-sisting in the care for its being. Reinterpreting *Being and Time*, he argues that Dasein's fundamental ek-sistence—that is, its constitutive being extended into the world, thus its differential belonging—is neither metaphysical essence nor existence, but is "the guardianship, that is, care for being" (1976, 343/1998, 261). While the notion of care refers us back to *Being and Time*'s account, which found the origin of responsibility in the stretching-out of Dasein between thrownness and death (see Haugeland 1998; Crowell 2013), the account in this later period (roughly, 1945 onwards) relocates the source in the relation between the claim of Being (*Anspruch*, also *Zuspruch* and *Zusage*) and the corresponding (*Entsprechen*) letting-be and dwelling of the human being. Decisive in each case is the source of normativity in difference and temporal non-coincidence: because Dasein is not simply what it is at any given time, it has to take over its being. (In the context of reading Derrida below, I will characterize the normativity in question as a 'normativity beyond norms,' irreducible to but lending force to norms.)[2] While *Being and Time* stressed the call's origin in Dasein, the later work sees Dasein as always-already responsive to being's call. In this later work, Heidegger found it misleading to make of human existence the starting point of the ontological inquiry into being. Instead, he emphasized the anteriority of being and its calling. Along with this change came a transformation of responsibility from the priority of Dasein's solicitous interrogation (*sorgendes Fragen*) of being to affirming being and its address. In the *Country Path Conversations* (1995/2010), for instance, Heidegger suggests that questioning depends on a prior responding that is not itself a response to a question. In

[2] I adapt the suggestive (if perhaps also misleading) phrase "normativity beyond norms" from Bertram's and Perpich's "normativity without norms" (Bertram 2002a, 2006; Perpich 2008, 124ff.).

approaching the question of being from the outset as a question, as *Being and Time* did, the questioners would already have lost their way (Heidegger 1995, 24/2010, 15). The question of being demands recognizing the questioner's belatedness: Dasein is not first of all questioning being but addressed by being and its 'granting saying' (*Zusage*) in language, a language that precedes Dasein and calls it into its being. In the context of his originary ethics, then, Heidegger argues that being demands of Dasein an originary, nonvoluntary affirmation of being as well as of language as the "house of being" (1976, 313, 333, 358-59/1998, 239, 254, 274). He calls this demand the claim (*Anspruch*) (1976, 313, 319, 358-363/1998, 243, 272-75), the comforting word (*Zuspruch*) (1985, 170, 185/1982, 76, 90; see also Heidegger 1985, 67, 75; 1976, 150, 164—translated in Heidegger 1971, 146 as "primal call," then at 159 as "summons"), the promise or command, bid or behest (*Geheiss, Verheissung*) (1985, 23, 26-30/1971, 204, 203-07, 1976, 360/1998, 273, where "*Geheiss*" is translated as "gathered call"; see also the essay "On the Question of Being" in Heidegger 1976, 408, 424); or the vow or granting saying of being (*Zusage*) (1985, 165-66, 169-70, 174/1982, 71, 76, 79-80; see also translator's note, 1982, 78).

Although the speaker would be being or language rather than a human individual, it is no accident that these terms appear to be performative speech acts: address, claim, word of comfort or support, summons, promise, vow or saying. And indeed, the sense of belated responsivity and elemental belonging—of being thrown into a preceding-exceeding element beyond our control—as the source of normativity is perhaps most accessible in the aspect of language. The Western tradition tends to define the human being as the being that speaks, but on Heidegger's view, we speak only by responding to the prior speaking of language itself, a speaking that claims and addresses us; we respond to the opening address and comforting word of language, or the granting saying of being. If language is the "house of being" (Heidegger 1976, 313/1998, 239)—that is, the disclosure or "worlding" of world is structured linguistically from the beginning—then it is language itself that speaks, however counterintuitive that may sound. In many formulations of this period, Heidegger links this claim or address (*Zuspruch*) with corresponding (*Entsprechen*), where of course both notions are etymologically linked to language (*Sprache*):

> Language speaks. The human being speaks to the extent he [sic] corresponds [or speaks back] to language. This corresponding is listening. It hears because it belongs to the promise of stillness [*Die Sprache spricht. Der Mensch spricht, insofern er der Sprache entspricht. Das Entsprechen ist Hören. Es hört, insofern es dem Geheiß der Stille gehört.*] (1985, 30, translation modified/1971, 207)

The human belongs to a linguistically pre-structured world first of all by listening to its call, by in fact always already responding to its precedence. The play on *Sprache* and *Entsprechen* (language and corresponding) is matched here by the play on *Hören* and *Zugehören* (listening and belonging; see also Heidegger 1976, 316/1998, 241; 1989, 407). We can pose questions, even regarding language itself, only by using language, and thus already moving within its element. In this sense, the affirmative response to, or corresponding with, language, would be prior to speaking and to questioning language. Similarly, we can ask after being only by

already dwelling within it.

But of course, despite the precedence we just asserted, language does not speak without speakers, and being does not address without addressees. We must be careful to not simply switch the active instance—the first speaker, the performer of the speech act—from the human speaker to being or language; rather, the matter to be thought calls on us to undo the dichotomies of subject and object, activity and passivity. The normative or the performative here emerges precisely not with an already given subject and its activity, whether human or not (Fritsch 2013b). After all, if being is the fourfold, the mortals are one of its four next to earth, sky, and divinities. The claim of the differentiated fourfold calls on us to think beyond the subject-object divide, for instance in the middle voice (Scott 1988, 1990; Llewellyn 1991). It is in this middle position between activity and passivity, in the elemental milieu of language and being, that normativity emerges. The crucial idea is still, as in *Being and Time*, that it is the very difference, the ek-sistence of being and standing out into the world, that issues the call to be (Heidegger 1985, 29/1971, 206). Accordingly, humans can be what they are only in this relation to an apparent outside—being, the world, the fourfold—that is in fact their very "essence," their most "interior"—the opposition of inside-outside thus losing its pertinence along with the subject-object dyad.[3] Human beings "ek-sist" and "stand out into" the world (Heidegger 1976, 324/1998, 249). They are not given, but must be (set) *on the move* to be what they are in the process of becoming.

Thus, the normativity is not derived from a prior non-normative ontology but originates with the constitutive belonging to a differential world; differential here means that neither Dasein nor world are static, but can come to be what they are only in unfolding differences: between Dasein and world, but also between thing and being (the ontico-ontological difference), between concealment and unconcealment, and among the four of the fourfold (earth and sky, mortals and divinities). I would now like to discuss how this Heideggerian normativity can be developed further, on its own premises, as a critical stance.

## II. THREE LEVELS OF NORMATIVITY

Because the normativity of being's claim is precisely "always already" in play (for it is constitutive of our being), it cannot be the case that I refuse it as I might a specific, binarily coded norm.[4] If I am asked not to lie, it is because I could; here, however, the demand to correspond to being could not be refused, for we have always already corresponded, otherwise there would have been no disclosure, no being-in-the-world. If correspondence is necessary and happens anyway, then what do we gain for a critical phenomenology or a critical ontology by insisting on it?

[3] Heidegger interprets the human "essence" in terms of the allegedly uniquely human relation to language and death; as special "capacities" (*Vermögen*), language and death permit disclosure "as such" (2000, 180/1971, 176; 1985, 203/1982, 107). On understanding "as such"—much criticized by Derrida in his *Of Spirit* (1989), *Aporias* (1993b) and elsewhere—see especially Dahlstrom 2001.

[4] This constitutive dependence is often understood as a transcendental condition of possibility. For investigations regarding Heidegger's use of transcendental arguments, see Crowell and Malpas (2007).

Focusing still on Heidegger, I want to answer this critical question in the following way. While the normativity is always already operative, it calls on us to correspond to it more explicitly—and in the distinctions hidden in this "more" lies the critical force. The normativity in effect asks us to recognize our being. In *Being and Time,* the call (there, the call of conscience) said primarily "be your being as thrown project," that is, open up to given possibilities, in their very indeterminacy, as your own potential; in the 1950s, the normativity claims us to be our being by letting the world be, a world to which we belong and without which we could not be what we are. The demand now is to listen to being so as to appropriate our being *and* let the inappropriable be by belonging to the fourfold. Thus, the normative force, the critical potential, lies in the demand to better understand our ontological constitution, and a normative fault would lie, not in failing to live up to a given norm, but in misrecognizing this constitution. As it is put at the end of "The Thing," we are called on to take "a step back" so as to be "vigilant" (*wachsam*) regarding the belonging to the fourfold (Heidegger 2000, 183/1971, 179), when in fact our building and dwelling has already received its directions from the fourfold (Heidegger 2000, 161; see also Sikka 2018, 106).[5]

Accordingly, Heidegger at times distinguishes between hearing the call, paying attention to it, and responsibly transforming one's conduct in view of heeding the call expressly. For instance, *What is Philosophy?* (1955) raises the question of how the normativity can be both always already operative, and yet give rise to further elaboration and, with that, critical distinctions between this or that way of hearing the call of being. Critique emerges with the crucial differences between hearing the call as call (*Hören* rather than *Überhören*, that is, missing the very fact that one responds to a call and finds oneself in correspondence); paying attention to it (*darauf achten*); expressly appropriating (*eigens übernehmen*) it; and unfolding (*Entfalten*) the call or voice of being (*Stimme des Seins*) in comportment (Heidegger 2006, 20).

That Heidegger deploys the normativity in this way could be verified by a brief re-reading of the well-known *The Question Concerning Technology* (1953/1977). In that essay, en-framing (*Gestell*) is presented as a historical mode of being that claims humans (just like *Zusage*, *Zuspruch*, and so on), but it does so by withdrawing itself in such a way that humans follow the call without recognizing it *as* call. The normative-critical potential of the normativity in question then lies in the demand to recognize, to "not fail to hear" enframing's claim (*der Anspruch des Gestells*) as a claim in the first place (Heidegger 2000, 28/1977, 26-27). Taking a step back, we should understand that in challenging-forth, we are in fact doing the bidding of enframing. Commenting on Heisenberg's claim that today humanity encounters only itself—a claim we hear often today in the Anthropocene as the idea that we've reached "the end of nature," as McKibben's (1989) famous book put it, that, for example, there is no atmospherical particle untouched by human-made climate change (Vogel 2015)—Heidegger argues that this is an illusion that stems from overlooking

[5] Similarly, at the end of "… poetically man dwells", Heidegger writes: "For dwelling can be unpoetic [that is, technical] only because dwelling is poetic in essence," (2000, 206/1971, 225)—that is, even unpoetic dwelling dwells poetically, "in essence."

or not hearing (*Überhören*) being's claim upon us. This claim in fact makes us, in our very being, respondents rather than sole originators of our projects (Heidegger 2000, 28/1977, 26-27). As late-coming respondents, we cannot only encounter ourselves, but have been preceded, and in fact claimed, by a nonhuman alterity that is more powerful than we are. That is why we cannot become "masters of the earth" (Heidegger 2000, 152/1971, 147).

The location of the sources of normativity in being means that we cannot neatly distinguish the descriptive from the prescriptive. However, we can, in principle, differentiate degrees of awareness, the explicitness of the responsivity and responsibility, and what Heidegger calls the 'unfolding' of the normativity in question. Accordingly, this normativity can be analyzed on (at least) three heuristic levels: on the first, all humans are claimed by being (including the most ruthless *homo faber*); on the second, we hear the claim of being in enframing, while on the third we not only hear it, but pay attention and unfold the claim further. The crucial normative difference is one between what we might call non-attentive corresponding (Level 1), attentive corresponding (Level 2), and appropriate-responsible comportment (Level 3), that is, an "unfolding comportment expressly taken over by us [*von uns eigens übernommenes und sich entfaltendes Verhalten*]" as our responsibility in response to the claim to correspond (Heidegger 2006, 20). Generally speaking, critique emerges, not merely with being's claim, but with its demand to be heard and unfolded on subsequent levels.

However, while these distinctions between levels permit critique, it is difficult to see how even the most explicit (and seemingly demanding) normativity at Level 3 could, directly and without further ado, give us specific norms for a critical originary ethics, as Heidegger claims in the *Letter on Humanism.* There, he draws what I deem an overly strong contrast between dwelling in being, which is said to give us "laws and rules," and human reason as merely 'constructing' norms from out of itself (Heidegger 1976, 360/1998, 273-74). If we reject this contrast as overly dichotomous, as I think we should, a more convincing approach would have to elaborate on attentiveness and responsible comportment. As I think is well known, Heidegger, who privileges the relation between being and the human, says little about responsible comportment among humans. When he does address politics, being-historical claims about our current epoch and terms such as 'the people' and 'the state' tend to dominate the discussion. The problem with this, as John Caputo (1993) has long argued, is that the claim of being is then easily associated with a privileged locus of appearance in a people or a place, a language or a time, or even in some individuals (marked as strong, authentic, or whatever). That is one of the reasons we will in a moment turn to Derrida's productive and critical re-reading of Heidegger's claim of being.

As for attentiveness, Heidegger's key point seems to me to be that recognizing the prior address of being calls on us to understand it better, as indeed his various elaborations of being (from the meaning of being to *Ereignis*) seek to do. One such better understanding is offered by the fourfold, which should be taken as Heidegger's account (there could be others) of what I just called the attentive corresponding demanded by the claim of being. As such, the fourfold can help us better face the ever-present danger of forgetting being and overemphasizing presence by focusing on the manipulability of entities—comparable to what Adorno and Horkheimer (2002) called instrumental rationality—thereby missing

or even dismissing the process of emergence into presence, which constitutively includes absencing. The critical potential of originary ethics suggests that hearing the call of being even in enframing entails greater humility before the unmasterability of the earth in its differential mirror-play in the fourfold. Further, the critical potential of Heideggerian normativity, while not future-directed along progressive, linear lines, also lies in opening up new possibilities for worlding, for what Niklas Kompridis (2006) has called possibility-enabling practices. The address of being, precisely by differentially playing with absence, can awaken us to new possibilities for disclosure, indicating that a different world is possible.

## III. DERRIDA ON HEIDEGGER'S *ZUSAGE*

So far, I have presented Heidegger's account in the best possible light I could give it here. Turning now to Derrida, I will continue to focus on the positive appropriation and transformation of the claim of being. But I will begin by briefly noting a number of reservations, some of which guide Derrida's readings explicitly. First, there is Heidegger's tendency to cast the normativity in terms of a binary, mostly famously between authenticity and inauthenticity (which we find as late as in his 1942 interpretation of Antigone in *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*), and at times (especially during the fateful early 1930s and Heidegger's revealing involvement with National Socialism) between the (implied) weak ones and the "strong ones [*die Starken*]" who can take up being's gathering in the *logos* (Heidegger 1983, 142/2000, 142).[6] As we have just seen, however, the normativity in question does not permit a binary opposition between abiding by it or failing to do so. We are constitutively responding to being's address, though there are different ways and degrees of recognizing and living this active responsivity. Further, despite the crucial role of difference, Heidegger locates the normativity between humanity and being, and that tends to de-differentiate both poles. The apparent unity of the human makes it hard to forge a pathway towards social ethics or politics, and the attempts by followers of Heidegger to extend 'correspondence' to intersubjective relations, as Waldenfels (1994) suggested, failed (Guzzoni 1980; Marx 1983). Subsequent critical elaborations have disaggregated being in a way that foregrounds evolution, plants and animals, ancestors, singular others, and so on (Jonas 1966; Derrida 2008a). The unity also opened Heidegger to the Levinasian (1969) critique of a totalizing ontology that does not respect the alterity and difference of the singular other, a critique that Derrida mediated and negotiated ever since the well-known early essay "Violence and Metaphysics," (2001) including the claim in the essays *Geschlecht I–IV* that Heidegger papers over sexual difference (Derrida 2008b; 1993a; 2020). On the side of being, Derrida has often complained of its unity and the univocity of its address, claiming that *différance* is "older" than the name and claim of being (1982, 22/1972, 23). Heidegger's account

[6] I do not mean to imply that the elitist tendencies sufficiently explain Heidegger's (temporary) commitment to National Socialism, but given the infamous later reference in the same lecture to the "inner truth and greatness" of the movement (1983, 152/2000, 213), the opposition between the strong and the weak should be given more attention.

of a special belonging of humanity to being is further rejected as continuing the Western metaphysics of logocentric humanism and anthropocentrism (Derrida 1989/1987, 1993b).

Despite these reservations and transformations, which I will not detail here, Derrida considers Heidegger's work an "uncircumventable meditation" (1982, 22/1972, 22), even if Derrida's more overtly ethical and political writings are more often associated, for better or worse, with Levinas. Suffice it to say here that I believe the debate about whether, and if so to what extent, Derrida's "ethics" is Levinasian (pitting Bernasconi 1988, 1997, 1998; Critchley 1992; Caputo 1998, against Hägglund 2004, 2008; for attempts at mediation, see Fritsch 2011; Haddad 2013; see also Lawlor 2016, 2018), is placed in a more enlightening context when Heidegger is added to the mix, both as Levinas's (2000) "obligatory passage" (22) and as one of Derrida's sources (Fritsch 2013b). Here, I will seek to show that Derrida primarily re-elaborates Heidegger's ontological 'normativity' (a term Derrida rarely uses in his own name, though there are exceptions, e.g. Derrida 1992a, 62/1991, 85) in the form of *Anspruch*, *Zuspruch* or *Zusage* by focusing on a long footnote to *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*. The note, which had been prompted by Françoise Dastur's well-informed intervention, is meant to acknowledge that the troublesome proximity in Heidegger between "spirit" and the priority of Dasein's questioning becomes more complicated in Heidegger's later work. Noting the shift from Dasein's questioning to its responsivity to a language that comes in advance of the question, Derrida writes:

> *Anfrage* and *Nachfrage* [the questioning that *Being and Time* sees as basic to Dasein's understanding of being] presuppose this advance, this fore-coming [*prévenante*] address (*Zuspruch*) of language. Language is *already* there, in advance (*im voraus*) at the moment at which any question can arise about it. In this it exceeds the question. This advance is, before any contract, a sort of promise of originary alliance to which we must have in some sense already acquiesced, already said *yes*, given a pledge [*Cette avance est, avant tout contrat, une sorte de promesse ou d'alliance originaire à laquelle nous devons avoir en quelque sorte déjà acquiescé, déjà dit oui, donné un gage*] whatever may be the negativity or problematicity of the discourse which may follow. This promise, this reply which is produced a priori in the form of acquiescence, this commitment of language towards language [*cet engagement de la parole envers la parole*], this giving of language by language and to language is what Heidegger at this point regularly names *Zusage*. (1989, 129/1987, 148)

Derrida is here commenting on Heidegger, to be sure, but he is also translating the latter's vocabulary into his own. He stresses several elements that we can rediscover in passages that he used in his own name, often extensively. Some of these elements that Derrida appropriates from Heidegger's *Zuspruch* and *Zusage* include:

(i) the gift of language by language (not by some other instance), which is also the gift of phenomenality in general, or the gift of world that exceeds the question and the questioner from an irretrievable past toward an unforeseeable future;

(ii) the notion of an advance and what is here called *prévenance* that comes before and obliges us by holding us responsible;
(iii) the pledge that is a response to the promise of the world, the promise of an originary belonging as what Derrida sometimes indeed calls the promise *as* world (2017, 47/1995b, 39);
(iv) finally, the notion of an involuntary affirmation, a saying *yes* to what comes before and exceeds the present.

It would be worthwhile to discuss these four notions (gift, advance or *prévenance*, promise, and affirmation) first in isolation before showing how they cooperate to give rise to the normativity (what I will call a normativity beyond norms) of the conjunction of deconstruction and critique that I will propose. Here, I will focus on affirmation as the source of critique, referencing the gift, the advance, and the promise only in passing.

## IV. DOUBLE AFFIRMATION

In my reading of Heidegger's originary ethics, I have stressed the role of difference in the source of normativity: constitutive difference means a being is not given as what it is, but must return to itself in response to difference in its very belonging. Unsurprisingly, this role of difference becomes more pronounced in Derrida. Deconstruction views an object of investigation as emerging out of its constitutive differential relations to others. The object is not seen as pre-existing its context but to owe itself to the environment of its emergence and being. Difference, as Saussure had it, is prior to identity. But—and here indeed lies a difference between a certain Saussure and deconstruction (Bertram 2002b; Bennington 2004)—the context itself is not taken to be exhaustively analyzable, as if we could list all of its elements in a complete list. The context is itself undergoing change as it constitutes the elements of which it is made up. Each element in the context is in a similar position of changing with its context, the context changing with them, so that no element can bounce off a stable identity. Further, and for the same reason, the dependence on a constitutive context is not fully determining for an element, for it persists only in the process of re-contextualizing iteration.

The well-known neologism of *différance* is meant to capture these two moments of differentiation and iterability: a differential situation in context and recontextualizing deferral, anticipation of future environments (for not anything goes) and exposure to an open-ended, unforeseeable future of iterations. And despite having first developed it primarily in the context of structuralist accounts of language and culture, it is the notion of *différance* that Derrida sees—against Heidegger's limiting of being's address to human beings—as structuring and claiming mortal life in general (Derrida and Roudinesco 2004, 63/2001, 106-07; Glendinning 2001, 108). Resisting assimilation to the linguistic turn, Derrida has from the beginning insisted that *différance* holds wherever there are elements in a more or less holistic system, for instance, DNA or organisms in an environment (1995a, 268-69/1992b, 282-84; Derrida and Ferraris 2001, 76-77).

An identity, then, does not come into the world identical to itself. Its very "itself" depends on re-identifications, by others and by itself. Responding to its differential context, identity must seek its identity in an ever-deferred future and an immemorial past, a non-origin that prompts the inventions of origin. With this seeking, performativity and normativity have become inseparable from identity. Identity must rely, and from the beginning, on a repetition that promises the same. In the case of a living entity capable of thus intending its future repetition, we could speak of a self-affirmation that expects or promises to come back to itself despite its need to refer and appropriate from others in the context into which *différance* will have cast it. But if self-affirmation requires differentiation from its environment, then this context precedes the affirmation, and is affirmed first of all in a way that permits us to see the context as prompting the affirmation. An identity must always already have affirmed the preceding context from which it is in the process of appropriating to be self-affirmative in the first place. That is why the language of "self-affirmation" is misleading, making it seem as if affirmation originated with a "self" when in fact any sense of self or identity only emerges in the on-going affirmation. Again, here the grammar of the middle voice might help, which Derrida indeed claims for *différance* (1982, 9/1972, 8-9) and also for *aimance* (1997, 23 n. 3/1994b, 24-25 n. 5), the "lovence" or "minimal friendship" that, as I will discuss briefly below, names another inflection of affirmation. Lacking the middle voice, we tend to resort to reflexive constructions, such as "affirmation affirms (itself)" (recall Heidegger's "speech speaks" or "world worlds"), constructions which posit an 'itself' or a reflexive self-relation, that is, an identity there where it is precisely originary differentiation that prompts the always incomplete re-identification.

On account of its relation to differentiation, affirmation is double, a duplicity that further doubles itself (Derrida 2002, 247; 2011, 112, 122ff., 140-01, 182/1986, 129, 140ff., 161-62, 208). Affirmation must affirm the self and the other, the one to affirm the other, but also, at the same time and in the same moment, repeat itself, that is, affirm or promise its future repetition. In parsing out the duplicity, we can try to analytically separate that which is inseparable in affirmation. First, affirmation must affirm, along with the self, the other-than-self; otherness here ranges from the future self, to other identities, to the open-ended context. With no recourse to a meta-language or view from nowhere, affirmation is a response to preceding contexts, contexts that are affirmed alongside the future self in process. Second, the self-other-reference must "from the beginning" (but the beginning is already a response) affirm to repeat the affirmation in the future. In view of the next section on critique, it helps if we see this future as itself split into two futures to be affirmed, introducing a third duplicity. Affirmation must affirm the future of its self-repetition (hence, a future in which its self is promised, a future horizon or world in which the self is claimed to continue) as well as an open-ended future, a future it cannot anticipate (Derrida 2002, 247). The open-ended future-to come (*l'à-venir*), which *Specters of Marx*, following Walter Benjamin in particular, calls "messianic without messianism" (1994a, 227, 74, 92/1993c, 96, 110, 124), is not a mere accident but is "quasi-transcendentally" necessary and thus must be affirmed as enabling of the self.[7] It indicates the inexhaustibility or indeterminability of

[7] For more on the idea of "quasi-transcendental" conditions of possibility in Derrida, permit me to refer to Fritsch (2005, chapter 2; 2011).

context, and hence the possibility of relaunching toward another context. This possibility is affirmed along with, or in and through, the affirmation of the preceding context. However, this future to-come is also the essential possibility of alteration, contamination, and death.

Double affirmation provides an entry-point to the range of social-ontological-cum-normative concepts that so prominently populate Derrida's texts from the 1980s onwards: justice beyond law, unconditional hospitality, friendship, the gift, responsibility, democracy-to-come, and the like. To give a brief indication, let us elaborate how affirmation radiates out into friendship, the *aimance* whose middle voice we just mentioned. Drawing on Heidegger's account of the friendly "correspondence" between being and the human, but seeking to overcome its harmonious "logocentrism" by differentiating the human into singularities, *aimance* names the "anterior affirmation of being-together in allocution" (*affirmation antérieure de l'être-ensemble dans l'allocution*) (Derrida 1997, 249/1994b, 279). As such an affirmation, it gives rise to a "community without community" (62/81) or a "sort of minimal community" (236/263), prior to positive law and specific forms of community. Every political identity and every social relation, no matter how antagonistic, can only be thought on the basis of a prior affirmation, consent, promise, and minimal friendship. One way in which this anterior affirmation of the other and others in social and political space manifests itself, Derrida argues, is as the promise to keep affirming oneself and the other, to go on speaking (not to "ghost" the other), and to abstain from violence. This nonchosen, heterononomic promise to tell the truth and to abstain from violence entails a "minimum of friendship or consent" (Derrida 1997, 214/1994b, 243) that spells out the "law of originary sociality" (*loi de socialité originaire)* (231/258). This law 'before law' does not create the commonality of a shared space, but, precisely on account of its necessary advance, the precedence of an unmasterable alterity—another feature we saw Derrida highlight in response to Heidegger's *Zusage*. This precedence entails that "we are caught up, one and another, in a sort of heterononomic and dissymmetrical curving of social space (*une sorte de courbure hétéronomique et dissymétrique de l'espace social)*—more precisely, a curving of the relation to the other: prior to all organized socius, all politeia, all determined government, before all 'law'" (231/258, translation modified). What precedes me, for Derrida, is thus not just the differential play of being, but with this play, the alterity of others before and with me, other living beings and animals in evolution as well as ancestors and the contemporaries born before as well as after me. The gift of phenomenality and language in general is articulated in the terrestrial and intergenerational gifting that makes my life possible while of course also constraining it (Fritsch 2018a).

It is important to grasp the link between the advance of language and the promise of a minimal friendship that commits me to the singular other. In the context of linguistic interactions, the fact that I must already have affirmed language entails for Derrida that I promise to speak the truth and refrain from violence (Barbour 2017b). At the risk of once more merely shifting agency away from speakers to language, we could say that language—the play of differences, that Derrida no longer restricts to human speech, though of course we must also retain its specificity—commits me to the other, by forcing me to promise to speak the truth (even if and especially if I lie, and if my sincerity or insincerity must remain what Derrida calls a "secret" to the other, as Barbour [2017a] shows). The force

lies in the fact that the advance, the gift of language, enables my being and my speaking in the first place, but such that, on account of its differential play, disables my identity as merely given or constant. Double affirmation thus turns into a futural promise to keep on being the speaker I implied I was, and that means, to keep on speaking, to stand for what I said, to ask the other to believe my sincerity and to commit to truth, despite the fact that these turn out to be unkeepable promises (Derrida 1997, 214/1994b, 243). For, if meaning depends on context, and contexts necessarily change due to the differentiation requirement, then I cannot mean exactly the same thing today as I did when I made the promise, or the promise was being made through and with me. As I argue elsewhere, this necessary aporicity of the higher-order normative conditions of communication is one of the major differences between Habermas's transcendental pragmatics and Derrida's quasi-transcendental analysis (Fritsch 2013a, 2019a, 2019b).

## V. AFFIRMATION AND CRITIQUE

I began by calling on critical theory and political thought not to prioritize normative or ontological considerations, but to afford sufficient room to both beyond the worn-out fact-value dichotomy. Heidegger and Derrida do this in a particular way, namely by showing how normativity emerges with "ontology," "hauntology," or "quasi-transcendental" argumentation. I want to conclude by coming back to this in the form of indicating how double affirmation might relate to critique. The last two centuries have produced a number of different conceptions of critique (for an overview, see de Boer (2012) for phenomenology and "affirmative critique," see also Marder (2014, especially 135ff.). Here I have in mind only a very general form that is sufficiently widespread to merit treatment. On this conception, critique draws on normative standards to evaluate actions, policies, institutions, and so on. For many social and political theorists, the first and most significant task is thus to justify norms that can serve as critical standards in assessing a given situation, institution, or society. At least in rudimentary form, the norms imply, or may be extrapolated toward, an ideal situation, institution, or society. Social and political critique is then enabled by the gap between the actual and the ideal. On this view, by justifying their norms, critics give themselves the authority to accuse as well as to judge. In inheriting Marx, Derrida makes clear he endorses (but also significantly transforms, as we will see) this form of "idealist" or

Marxist critique, despite the reservations Derrida expresses about critique:[8]

> The recourse to a certain *spirit* of the Marxist critique remains urgent and will have to remain indefinitely necessary in order to denounce and reduce the gap [the gap between an empirical reality and a regulating ideal {*l'écart entre une réalité empirique et un idéal régulateur*}] *as much as possible*, in order to adjust 'reality' to the 'ideal' in the course of a necessarily infinite process. This Marxist critique can still be fruitful if one knows how to adapt it to new conditions. (1994a, 107/1993c, 143)

Although Derrida warns us, earlier in the same text, not to identify deconstruction with critique (1994a, 86/1993c, 116), he can, I would say, endorse this spirit of critique as one (but only one) dimension of double affirmation, the one that, as we saw, affirms the horizonal future of anticipation. A crucial task for this conjunction of deconstruction and critique would then consist in developing norms and ideals in response to affirmation. The discussion of friendship may have given an albeit brief indication as to how this might be done. (For a more elaborate attempt in the context of justice between generations, see Fritsch 2018a, 2020; see also Fritsch 2018b for a related attempt in environmental ethics.)

But, as we saw, double affirmation relates us also to a non-horizonal future, and so deconstruction is not simply critique. In this distance from critique, deconstruction poses questions about the critical stance and its operation (Derrida 1994a, 86/1993c, 116). On its reverse side, affirmation relates critique to the open-ended future to-come, to the promise of a justice without horizon of anticipation, and to the "undeconstructibility" of justice beyond positive law (1994a, 112/1993c, 147). True to affirmation in this double sense, then, Derrida goes on to claim that "a certain emancipatory and messianic affirmation, a certain experience of the promise" (1994a, 111/1993c, 146) should be understood to be the "ground" or "soil" of critique, a "ground that is not yet critique, even if it is not, not yet, pre-critique" (*un sol qui n'est pas encore critique, même s'il n'est pas, pas encore, précritiqu*e) (1994a, 110/1993c, 145, translation modified). The projection of critical horizons must recognize the precedence of double affirmation as the very source of critique, but also as limitation and principled contestability of such horizons (Fritsch 2005, 96ff.). Prior to critique, critical

[8] Indeed, at times Derrida seems to contrast affirmation and critique, at least if the latter is "dogmatic": speaking of *Glas* he suggests its operations pursue "a deconstruction . . . that would be affirmative" and that "is not a critical operation; it takes critique as its object," especially the trust and authority granted to "the deciding agency, the ultimate possibility of the decidable: deconstruction is a deconstruction of critical dogmatics [*la dogmatique critique*]" (1995a, 54/1992b, 59-60). *Specters of Marx* distinguishes "the spirit of Marxist critique" from "what could be called, to go quickly, a deconstruction, there where the latter is no longer simply a critique" because of "the questions it poses to any critique and even to any question" (1994a, 86/1993c, 116). What I say below about the relation between affirmation and critique is meant to take undecidability as well as distrust of the critic's authority into account. Alongside undecidability, we should also note the paradox of a deconstruction that poses questions about any critical question. As we will see, affirmation and critical questioning cannot, for Derrida, be situated at different levels of priority.

theory is to take note of a more or less involuntary but constitutive affirmation of quasi-holistic networks such as social and ecological webs, language, and inheritance. As one way to see this, we can begin by viewing critique itself as subject to double affirmation: to be what it is, critique must affirm itself in the double and spatio-temporal sense I discussed above.

For Derrida, to deconstruct critique is to "radicalize" it, and to radicalize it is to insist that it must, for its very being, perpetually affirm itself as critique. For critique to affirm itself qua critique, it must critique itself (1994a, 116/1993c, 143). The idea in this case is not that critique, to be consistent and fair, should not make an exception for itself; this would be to already subject it to the norm of universality. If the "must" in "critique must critique itself" was only normative in this sense, critique could respond that, once it had sufficiently secured—for example procedurally—the justice of its standards, these would then be beyond critique; any other critique would already presuppose them. (This is, in effect, Apel's and Habermas's strategy in using performative contradictions; see Habermas 1990, 79ff.) By contrast, *différance* entails that the demand that critique re-affirm itself by criticizing itself is also quasi-ontological (or, in the language of *Specters*, hauntological): necessarily changing contexts, contexts that critique needs to be what it is, demand that critique open itself to its own transformation. It must "want itself" to be better, to reinterpret itself in new contexts, to overcome itself (Derrida 1994a, 110/1993c, 145). It must affirm itself as itself but so as to open itself to its becoming other. For this reason, critique must avoid over-confidence in progressive histories as well as in procedural norms and projected ideals, however carefully and consultative (that is, procedurally just) their determination may have been. To conceive of itself as being what it is only by becoming other, and to open itself to the demands of shifting contexts, including other voices in that context, means that critique must, for its very being, allow itself to be contested, in particular by those marginalized and oppressed by inherited life worlds and projected ideals. That is why the exordium to *Specters of Marx* insists that no justice can be thought without "the principle of some responsibility"

> before the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead, be they victims of wars, political or other kinds of violence, nationalist, racist, colonialist, sexist, or other kinds of exterminations, victims of the oppressions of capitalist imperialism or any of the forms of totalitarianism. (1994a, xviii/1993c, 15)

For critics, this means they must situate themselves, in specific, varying ways, in a history of violence and take responsibility for dead and unborn victims. They cannot proceed as if they were, *qua* critics, free of history, language, and earth. To claim the precedence of affirmation vis-à-vis critique is precisely to insist that the critic has always already affirmed the context and the language in which she formulates her critique, and that critique is not only to be aware of its own never quite neutral perspective, but is to proceed from this non-totalizable, non-objectifiable belonging. Affirmation, then, is undertaken neither by reference to a *given* community or identity, nor in view of a critical ideal projected into the future; in this sense, too, affirmation is "non-positive" (it does not affirm a bounded content)

and necessarily transgressive of boundaries (Derrida 1995a, 357/1992b, 368).[9]

We already heard that the normativity at issue asks to be elaborated further, including possibly in the form of propositional norms (e.g., the truth-telling requirement of speaking to the other). Despite this relation to norms and projected ideals, the normativity of double affirmation remains excessive to them; it is what we might call a normativity beyond norms. To see the specific import of this, let me return to the normativity of critique. If we have always already affirmed, and remain in the process of affirming, our differential yet constitutive relation to other humans and nonhumans, living and dead or not yet born, then we are affirming our dependence and vulnerability. We are vulnerable to the withholding of the support that we get from something larger on which we depend. Derrida speaks of this something that, in his words, "is larger and older and more powerful and more durable" than individuals, under many names: the system of differences, the structure of iterability, inheritance, friendship, *sur-vivance*, the world of life-death (or the earth as history and habitat of life), and so on (2004, 5/2001, 18). The constitutive insertedness into something larger that precedes, exceeds, and outlives the individual obligates: it asks to be received, affirmed, transformed, questioned, filtered, re-interpreted, and handed down (2004, 5-6/2001, 18). As indicated, this thought has significant potential for rethinking environmental and intergenerational justice; but here I want to return to the theme of critique, especially in its more overt institutional and political dimension.

Here we should take note of the conjunction of affirmation and vulnerability. Affirmation cannot but affirm dependence on others who also make up the differential-iterable structure of life and death. Affirmation should be understood as *a response*, not to Heidegger's being or language as such, but to an ineradicable vulnerability, mortality, dependence, and difference of the self from itself and others. The theme of vulnerability may be the best measure of our distance from, but also still recognizable continuity with, Heidegger's *Zusage*. As we saw, for Heidegger's ear, Dasein is not first of all questioning being but addressed by its "granting saying" in a language that calls on us to recognize and affirm our belonging to the play of being. In Derrida, this belated responsivity, this coming late to a meeting with oneself, entails being put in question by a differentiating immersion that renders the addressee vulnerable to the immemorial claim of preceding-exceeding others. Accordingly, as we will indicate, affirmation and critical questioning become inseparable moments.

For social and political critique, dependent, vulnerable responsivity implies the following. It is not that there *are* living (human) beings who *happen to be* mortal and vulnerable (mortality as one of their characteristics we have to take into consideration among others, such as species, gender, etc.), and for that reason set up protective institutions: parenting, kinship relations, cooperative mechanisms regarding production and consumption of goods and

[9] In an early essay on Bataille, Derrida (2001, n. 15) retrieves the notion of nonpositive affirmation from Foucault's essay on Bataille (1980, 35ff.). It might be worthwhile to pursue the link between Derridian affirmation (always also an affirmation of that which exceeds what his Bataille essay calls restricted economies) and Foucaultian transgression.

services, defensive alliances, and so on. Rather, individual human beings can come about and perpetuate their existence because such institutional and ecosystemic structures have come into existence as a result of biological evolution and as well as of ancestral building and planning. These preceding structures take that vulnerability into consideration from the beginning. As Benjamin (2003) says in his *Theses on the Concept of History*, "we have been expected on earth," some more and others less (390). To live is (first of all, and not in a merely secondary, derivative way) to affirm having benefited from such protective set-ups, and to continue to benefit from their shelter, their food, their recognition. The double normativity of affirmation (it affirms self and other, past and future, horizon and non-horizon) is thus prior to, though inseparable from, the lifeworld norms that sheltering and feeding institutions will bring forth. Such norms live off the performativity of affirmation, without the latter being reducible to the former. Affirmation precedes and exceeds the particular configuration of the extant, positive norms we have inherited.

If we now say, quite rightly, that it belongs to the meaning of a norm to be general—to cover similar cases, and to treat them alike—the institutional arrangements that support lives, and the norms they carry in more or less codified fashion, are not by their nature universal and egalitarian—or if they are, then always insufficiently so. They are designed to sustain some lives rather than others. In Lisa Guenther's (2020) felicitous formulation of the tasks of critical phenomenology, such inherited institutional set-ups and their norms entail "quasi-transcendental" "*ways of seeing* and even ways of *making the world*" (12). The differentiality of the support systems asserts itself here. The conflict between equal treatment and singular care, between universalism and favoring the near-and-dear, is intrinsic and endemic, and can only be addressed in better or in worse ways, not eliminated (Menke 2006; Fritsch 2010; Bankovsky 2013). Gender, race, class, nationality, ability, species, and contemporaneity may be the most prominent ways in which living, vulnerable beings are demarcated, often in less binary and more subtle ways than these concepts suggest. Support systems come with their own ways of shaping (and hiding this shaping) deeply ingrained ways of seeing and making the world. It is the task of critical phenomenology to bring to the foreground what is often taken for granted: nationalism, ableism, racism, sexism, humanism, colonialism, capitalist classism, and presentism.

That is one reason why normative political theory, though helpful at some point, is insufficient for critique. Critique should not just be based on an answer to the question: how would an ideal normative order configure various values and norms, some inherited and intuitively appealing, others more reflective and theoretically worked up? Critique needs to work from the genealogy of inherited normative orders and power structures that have emerged to support and elevate some lives at the expense of others (Mills 2014). And the critic should understand that her own position owes itself to such a history from which she cannot fully extricate herself, and from which her very writing and talking proceeds without ever being reducible to it.

Given the conflictual and exclusionary nature of lifeworld set-ups, affirmation is not just prior to critique, but also needs it. Without at least the stirrings of critique, affirmation would be no more than a "blind submission" to history and the powers that be (Derrida 1994a, 7/1993c, 28). Due to its very duplicity and structural incompleteness, affirmation

cannot but also engender some resistance to, and so some critique of, its inheritance in view of the future. But the source of this critical resistance to inherited norms and institutions is not to be found in a given universal. Rather, the perpetual source of critique lies in indetermination, in the inevitable deviation between norm and normed. Non-positive affirmation cannot but also affirm inherited arrangements, but is never exhaustively codified by them; in its iteration, it re-sets the set-up and re-opens heritable structures and their norms, breaching a pathway for possibility-disclosing critique. Affirmation is the bridge, the white noise, the interference between received norms and the norms the critic holds up against tradition. Critique finds itself exceeded, undone, contested, and to-be-redone by a mortal vulnerability that cannot be exhaustively captured by propositional norms; even if elaborated in terms of specific norms, it remains a normativity beyond norms. Isolated from critique, affirmation would be insufficient, but the critic cannot do without it: she must draw on its iterative force to solicit her lifeworld. Critique is born of the excess, resistance, and undecidability with which double affirmation affects and overwhelms any normative order.

To conclude, then, critique should be seen to unceasingly proceed from affirmation to avoid the critic's overconfidence or good conscience, insist on undecidability as the condition of just decision-making, and reveal the intricate imbrication of critique in contexts of historical violence and fragile ecologies that are to some extent withdrawn from critique.

## REFERENCES

*Two page numbers separated by a slash (/) give the English translation first and the original second.*

Adorno, Theodor and Max Horkheimer. 2002. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bankovsky, Miriam. 2013. *Perfecting Justice in Rawls, Habermas, and Honneth: A Deconstructive Perspective*. London: Continuum.

Barbour, Charles. 2017a. *Derrida's Secret: Perjury, Testimony, Oath*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

———. 2017b. "The Hazard of Truth: Perjury and Oath in Derrida's Later Work." *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 13 (2): 211–25.

Bennington, Geoffrey. 2004. "Saussure and Derrida." In *The Cambridge Companion to Saussure*, edited by Carol Sanders, 186-202. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Benjamin, Walter. 2003. *Selected Writings*, *Volume 4, 1938-1940,* edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Bernasconi, Robert. 1988. "The Trace of Levinas in Derrida" In *Derrida and Difference*, edited by David Wood and R. Bernasconi, 13–29. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

———. 1997. "What Goes around Comes around: Derrida and Levinas on the Economy of the Gift and the Gift of Genealogy." In *The Logic of the Gift: Towards an Ethics of Generosity*, edited by Alan D. Schrift. New York: Routledge.

———. 1998. "Different Styles of Eschatology: Derrida's Take on Levinas's Political Messianism." *Research in Phenomenology* 28: 3–19.

Bertram, Georg. 2002a. "Die Dekonstruktion der Normen und die Normen der Dekonstruktion." In *Dekonstruktion als Philosophie*, edied by Andrea Kern and Christoph Menke, 289-310. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.

———. 2002b. *Hermeneutik und Dekonstruktion: Konturen einer Auseinandersetzung der Gegenwartsphilosophie*. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.

Bertram, Georg. 2006. *Die Sprache und das Ganze. Entwurf einer antireduktionistischen Sprachphilosophie*. Weilerswist: Velbrueck Verlag.

Borgmann, Albert. 2020. "Being in the Anthropocene. World Appropriation in the Age of Global Warming." *Environmental Philosophy* 17 (1): 59–74.

Caputo, John D. 1993. *Demythologizing Heidegger.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

———. 1998. *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Coulthard, Sean Glen. 2014. *Red Skin White Mask: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Critchley, Simon. 1992. *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Crowell, Steve. 2013. *Normativity and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crowell, Steve and Jeff Malpas, eds. 2007. *Transcendental Heidegger*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Dahlstrom, Daniel. 2001. *Heidegger's Concept of Truth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dallmayr, Fred R. 1991. *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

de Boer, Karen and Ruth Sonderegger, eds. 2012. *Conceptions of Critique in Modern and Contemporary Philosophy*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Derrida, Jacques. 1972. *Marges: De la philosophie*. Paris: Minuit.

———. 1982. *Margins of Philosophy*. Translated by Alan Bass. Brighton, UK: Harvester Press.

———. 1986. *Parages*. Paris: Galilée.

———. 1987. *De l'esprit: Heidegger et la question*. Paris: Galilée.

———. 1989. *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*. Translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 1991. *Donner: Le Temps 1. La Fausse monnaie*. Paris: Galilée.

———. 1992a. *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*. Translated by Peggy Kamuf. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 1992b. *Points des suspension: Entretiens*. Paris: Galilée.

———. 1993a. "Heidegger's Ear: Philopolemology (Geschlecht IV)." In *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*, edited by John Sallis. Bloomington, 163–218. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

———. 1993b. *Aporias*. Translated by Thomas Dutoit. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

———. 1993c. *Spectres de Marx*. Paris: Galilée.

———. 1994a. *Specters of Marx*. Translated by Peggy Kamuf. London: Routledge.

———. 1994b. *Politiques de l'amitié*. Paris: Galilée.

———. 1995a. *Points . . .: Interviews, 1974–1994*. Translated by Peggy Kamuf et al. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

———. 1995b. "Avances," in Serge Margel, *Le Tombeau du dieu artisan*. Paris: Minuit.

———. 1996. *Apories*. Paris: Galilée.

———. 1997. *The Politics of Friendship*. Translated by George Collins. London: Verso.

———. 2001. Writing and Difference. Translated by Alan Bass. London: Routledge.

———. 2002. *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews 1971–2002*. Edited and translated by Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

———. 2008a. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Translated by David Wills. New York: Fordham University Press.

———. 2008b. *Psyche: Inventions of the Other. Vol. II*. Edited by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

———. 2011. *Parages*. Edited by John P. Leavey. Translated by Tom Conley et. al. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

———. 2017. *Advances*. Translated by Philippe Lynes. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

———. 2020. *Geschlecht III: Sex, Race, Nation, Humanity*. Translated by Katie Chenoweth and Rodrigo Therezo. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, Jacques, and Maurizio Ferraris. 2001. *A Taste for the Secret*. Edited by Giacomo Donis and David Webb. Translated by Giacomo Donis. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Derrida, Jacques and Elisabeth Roudinesco. 2001. *De Quoi Demain . . . Dialogue (Avec Elisabeth Roudinesco)*. Paris: Fayard/Galilée.

———. 2004. *For What Tomorrow: A Dialogue*. Translated by Jeff Fort. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Farin, Ingo. 1998. "Heidegger's Critique of Value Philosophy." *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 29: 268–80.

Foucault, Michel. 1980. "Preface to Transgression." In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays*, edited by Donald F. Bouchard, 29-52. Translated by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Fritsch, Matthias. 2005. *The Promise of Memory: History and Politics in Marx, Benjamin, and Derrida*. Albany: SUNY Press.

———. 2010. "Equality and Singularity in Justification and Application Discourses." *European Journal of Political Theory* 9 (3): 328–46.

———. 2011. "Deconstructive Aporias: Both Quasi-Transcendental and Normative." *Continental Philosophy Review* 44 (4): 439–68.

———. 2013a. "Sources of Morality in Habermas's Recent Work on Religion and Freedom." In *Habermas and Religion*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta, and Jonathan van Antwerpen, 482-522. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———. 2013b. "The Performative and the Normative." In *Performatives After Deconstruction*, edited by Mauro Senatore, 86–106. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

———. 2017. "'La justice doit porter au-delà de la vie présente': Derrida on Ethics Between Generations" *Symposium* 21 (1): 231–53.

———. 2018a. *Taking Turns with the Earth: Phenomenology, Deconstruction, and Intergenerational Justice*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

———. 2018b. "An Eco-Deconstructive Account of the Emergence of Normativity in 'Nature'." In *Eco-Deconstruction: Derrida and Environmental Philosophy*, edited by Matthias Fritsch, Philippe Lynes, and David Wood, 279-302. New York: Fordham University Press.

———. 2019a. "Deconstruction." In *The Cambridge Habermas Lexicon*, edited by Amy Allen and Eduardo Mendieta, 90–93. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2019b. "Futures of Habermas's Work" in: Los Angeles Review of Books, August 11. https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/futures-habermass-work

———. 2020. "Response to Critics of *Taking Turns with the Earth*." *Ethica & Politica/Ethics & Politics*, XXII (2): 557–88.

Glendinning, Simon, ed. 2001. *Arguing with Derrida*. London: Blackwell.

Guenther, Lisa. 2013. *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and Its Afterlives*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.

———. 2020. "Critical Phenomenology." In *50 Concepts for a Critical* Phenomenology*, edited by Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon, 11–16. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Guzzoni, Ute. 1980. "'Anspruch' und 'Entsprechung' und die Frage der Intersubjektivität." In *Nachdenken über Heidegger*, edited by Ute Guzzoni. Hildesheim: Gerstenberg.

———. 1990. "'Der lange und gewaltlose Blick auf den Gegenstand.' Überlegungen zum Denken bei Heidegger und Adorno." In *Martin Heidegger Weiterdenken*, edited by Albert Raffelt. Muenchen: Schnell & Steiner.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1990. *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Translated by Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Nicholsen Weber. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Haddad, Samir. 2013. *Derrida and the Inheritance of Democracy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hägglund, Martin. 2004. "The Necessity of Discrimination: Disjoining Derrida and Levinas." *Diacritics* 34 (1): 40–71.

———. 2008. *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Haugeland, John. 1998. *Having Thought: Essays in the Metaphysics of Mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

———. 2000. "Truth and Finitude: Heidegger's Transcendental Existentialism." In *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert Dreyfus, vol. I*, edited by M. Wrathall and J. Malpas, 43–78. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Heidegger, Martin. 1956. *What is Philosophy: A Bi-lingual Edition*. Translated by Wilde, Jean T and Kluback, William. New Haven, CT: College and University Press

———. (1971) 2001. *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Translated by Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper Collins.

———. 1976. *Wegmarken: Vol. 9 of Gesamtausgabe*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

———. 1977. *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays.* Translated by William Lovitt. New York: Harper.

———. 1982. *On the Way to Language*. Translated by Peter D. Hertz. New York: Harper & Row.

———. 1983. *Einführung in die Metaphysik: Vol. 40 of Gesamtausgabe*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

———. 1985. *Unterwegs Zur Sprache: Vol. 12 of Gesamtausgabe*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

———. 1989. *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis): Vol. 65 of Gesamtausgabe*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

———. 1995. *Feldweg-Gespräche: Vol. 77 of Gesamtausgabe*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

———. 1996. *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister."* Translated by William McNeill and Julia Davis. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

———. 1998. *Pathmarks.* Edited by William McNeill. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2000a. *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Translated by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt. New Haven: Yale University Press.

———. 2000b. *Vorträge und Aufsätze: Vol. 7 of Gesamtausgabe*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

———. 2006. *Identität und Differenz: Vol. 11 of Gesamtausgabe*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

———. 2008. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper Perennial.

———. 2010. *Country Path Conversations*. Translated by Bret Davis. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

How, Alan. 1995. *The Habermas-Gadamer Debate and the Nature of the Social*. Avebury, UK: Aldershot.

Jonas, Hans. (1966) 2001. *The Phenomenon of Life: Towards a Philosophical Biology*. Translated by Lawrence Vogel. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

———. 1984. *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of Ethics for the Technological Age*. Translated by Hans Jonas and David Herr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 1996. *Mortality and Morality: A Search for Good after Auschwitz*. Edited by Lawrence Vogel. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Lawlor, Leonard. 2016. *From Violence to Speaking Out: Apocalypse and Expression in Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

———. 2018. "Vulnerability and Violence: On the Poverty of the Remainder (or Beyond Kant)." *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 49 (3): 217–28.

Levinas, Emmanuel. 1961. *Totalité et infini: Essai sur l'extériorité*. La Haye: M. Nijhoff.

———. 1969. *Totality and Infinity*. Translated by A. Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

———. 1993. *Die, la mort, et le temps*. Paris: Editions Grasset & Fasquelle.

———. 2000. *God, Death, and Time*. Translated by Bettina Bergo. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Kompridis, Niklas. 2006. *Critique and Disclosure: Critical Theory between Past and Future*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Llewelyn, John. 1991. *The Middle Voice of Ecological Conscience: A Chiasmic Reading of Responsibility in the Neighbourhood of Heidegger, Levinas, and Others*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Marx, Karl. 1990. *Capital: Volume 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin.

Marx, Werner. 1983. *Gibt es auf Erden ein Maß? Grundbestimmungen einer nichtmetaphysischen Ethik*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.

Maconald, Iain, and Krzysztof Ziarek. 2008. *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Marder, Michael. 2014. *Phenomena-Critique-Logos: The Project of Critical Phenomenology*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

McKibben, Bill. 1989. *The End of Nature*. New York: Random House.

Mills, Charles. 2005. "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology." *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 20 (3): 165–84.

———. 2014. "White Time: The Chronic Injustice of Ideal Theory" *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 11 (1): 27–42.

Mitchell, Andrew J. 2015. *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Mörchen, Hermann. 1981. *Adorno und Heidegger. Untersuchung einer Philosophischen Kommunikationsverweigerung*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.

Nichols, Robert. 2020. *Theft is Property! Dispossession and Critical Theory*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Oliver, Kelly. 2015. *Earth and World: Philosophy after the Apollo Mission*. New York: Columbia University Press.

———. 2018. "Earth: Love It or Leave It." In *Eco-Deconstruction: Derrida and Environmental Philosophy*, edited by Matthias Fritsch, Philippe Lynes, and David Wood, 339–54. New York: Fordham University Press.

Sandel, Michael J. 1998. *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sikka, Sonia. 2018. *Heidegger, Morality, and Politics: Questioning the Shepherd of Being*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Scott, Charles E. 1988. "The Middle Voice in Being and Time". In *The Collegium Phaenomenologicum: The First Ten Years*, edited by Sallis, John, Moneta, Giuseppina Chiara, and Taminiaux, Jacques, 159–73. Dordrecht, NL: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

———. 1990. *The Question of Ethics: Nietzsche, Foucault, Heidegger*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Taylor, Charles. 2003. "Ethics and Ontology." *Journal of Philosophy* 100 (6): 305–20.

———. 2005. "Heidegger on Language." In *A Companion to Heidegger*, edited by Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall, 433–55. London: Blackwell Publishing.

Valentini, Laura. 2012. "Ideal vs. Nonideal Theory: A Conceptual Map." *Philosophy Compass* 7: 654–64.

Vogel, Steven. 2015. *Thinking like a Mall: Environmental Philosophy after the End of Nature*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Waldenfels, Bernhard. 1994. *Antwortregister*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

PUNCTA
*Journal of Critical Phenomenology*

# WHAT IS PHENOMENOLOGICAL ABOUT CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY? GUENTHER, AL-SAJI, AND THE HUSSERLIAN ACCOUNT OF ATTITUDES

MÉRÉDITH LAFERTÉ-COUTU
*The Pennsylvania State University*

Since Gayle Salamon's 2018 article "What is Critical about Critical Phenomenology?", phenomenologists and critical theorists have offered various responses to the question this title poses. In doing this, they articulated the following considerations: is renewed criticality targeting the phenomenological method itself, does it expand its subject matter to marginalized experiences, does it retool key phenomenological concepts?[1] One aspect of this debate that has been left under-interrogated, however, is the word "phenomenology" itself. There is after all another question to ask in this context: what is *phenomenological* about critical phenomenology? Many avenues of response are of course possible. Phenomenology could most broadly be meant as an approach that concerns itself with what is given in experience in order to describe the structures of that givenness. From a Husserlian perspective, pure phenomenology is the science which concerns itself with phenomena in the full and diverse sense of the word—not as understood by specific natural or human sciences. What is distinctive of phenomenology is thus not what subset or type of phenomena it is interested in but *how* it relates to them, which, as Husserl introduces *Ideas I*, happens "in a completely different attitude."[2]

While no agreement has been reached about the term "critical phenomenology," a consensus has nevertheless emerged: this "critical turn" involves a commitment to something more than description, namely to a practice with specific, situated ends. The introduction to *50 Concepts for a Critical* Phenomenology* labels it an "ameliorative" project (Weiss, Murphy, and Salamon, 2020, xiv). Duane D. Davis (2020) suggests intersectional

[1] See notably Aldea, Smaranda Andra, David Carr and Sara Heinëmaa, eds. 2021 (forthcoming).; Lisa Guenther (2020, 2021); Al-Saji (2019).

[2] The notion of attitudes is central to phenomenology, yet its various differentiations are not as often developed as the main distinction between the natural and phenomenological attitudes. In his very informative book *Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology: Nature, Spirit, and Life* (2014), Andrea Staiti lists many of those different attitudes in view of showing how the Husserlian notion of attitude responds to the Neo-Kantian account of standpoint (104-08). Even Staiti, however, does not specifically distinguish between the volitive and evaluative attitudes, or track the differences between attitudes which correspond to the different spheres of reason. Yet this is a distinction which is crucial to present purposes, because the evaluative sphere is affective, or can also be called aesthetic, while strictly speaking only the volitive concerns the realm of praxis. What is more, even when scholarship turns to Husserl's ethics in particular, those distinctions are usually not emphasized. See notably: Ullrich Melle (2007); Sophie Loidolt (2009); Henning Peucker (2008); Sara Heinämaa (2014), to name only a few.

phenomenology even holds "praxial promise" (6). Lisa Guenther perhaps most explicitly ties critical phenomenology to a political practice, defining it as a "struggle for liberation" and a commitment to a "restructuring [of] the world" (15). In describing the world-destroying effects of prolonged solitary confinement, or how perceptual practices of suspicious surveillance expose targeted others to state violence, Guenther performs what she calls a "hybrid phenomenological practice" of description and calls for transformation.[3] Alia Al-Saji importantly differs from Guenther in this respect by engaging Frantz Fanon's aporetic account of liberation. Fanon does not adhere to a clear single philosophical method, and Al-Saji (2019a) suggests that no practical program or hopes of "changing the world" should guide critical phenomenology (2).[4] Instead, she develops a phenomenology of racialized affect that proposes to dwell on, even touch, as Fanon writes, the wounds of colonialism.

Despite critical phenomenology's tendency to focus on developing a type of critical praxis, both the differences and continuities between Guenther's and Al-Saji's perspectives can be productively explored through the lens of Husserlian phenomenology. Specifically, turning to Husserl's account of attitude reveals how critical phenomenology can be understood as employing a plurality of "methods" through what turns out to be a plurality of attitudes. While Guenther and Al-Saji answer differently to Salamon's question "what is critical about critical phenomenology," such a focus on attitudes is able to connect their accounts while clarifying what separates them, in particular when it comes to understanding the role of transformative praxis.

For Husserl, there are three spheres of reason (*Vernunfsphäre*)—judging, valuing and willing—which allow for their distinctive attitudes: theoretical, aesthetic or affective, and practical.[5] Accordingly, a complete phenomenology of reason has to include branches dedicated not only to judgment, but to axiology and praxis. What is important about this parallel is that while to judge is to posit being, valuing and willing involve different position takings.[6] To value and will, feel, act, or desire, are intentional acts that constitute sense, but this sense is not reducible to the doxic theses, as Husserl calls them, implicit in such acts.

[3] See Guenther (2013, 2019).

[4] Al-Saji cites: "There is a point where methods devour themselves" [*Il y a un point où les méthodes se résorbent*] (Fanon 1967, 5).

[5] Husserl makes this recurring point in various contexts. See notably Husserl, *Ideas I,* 291/304 and 349ff.; *The Idea of Phenomenology,* 70; Hua 37, 260-01; See also Dominique Pradelle (2009) for an account of the difficulty to understand these different spheres as unified under the label of "general reason." Additionally, though the plurality of attitudes corresponding to these spheres usually goes unnoticed, see Andrea Staiti (2014, 98) for an account of the many kinds of attitudes.

[6] "Positionality" broadly refers, as Husserl describes in *Formal and Transcendental Logic,* to the any taking of position, whether judicative, volitive or valuative, and whether explicit or implicit, that is, whether it is also made thematic in a doxic position or not (see Husserl 1969, 136; 2014, 233). The sense of the proposition that correlates with the position is the "something meant" in a broadened manner (see Husserl 2004, 260; Husserl 2014, 227). Moreover, Husserl constantly makes passing references to these other attitudes and the distinct reflections they allow. See notably *First Philosophy,* 2019, 227/23-24; 303/99, *Ideas II,* 1989, 183-94/173-85, and *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, 1969, 135/120, and perhaps most explicitly, from Husserl's 1920 lectures on ethics, the section entitled "*Der Unterschied zswichen der axiologischen und der ethischen Einstellung*" (2004, 244-47).

What I intend through a feeling of value, for example, is not the same as what I intend through the doxic act on which the feeling is founded; perceiving a flower *as* beautiful is not the same as positing this flower as being. This difference between valuing and judging holds even if what Husserl thinks is a *feeling* of value (in this case beauty) is dependent on a judgment about the being of the flower. In other words, for Husserl, each sphere of reason is defined by different manners of givenness: something valued and something willed give themselves differently, and are constituted differently, than something that I perceive (as being). This central insight of Husserlian phenomenology entails that different spheres of reason allow for their particular type of reflection. If I can reflect on acts of valuing and willing to make their implicit doxic theses thematic, such as by reflecting on my valuing of this flower as beautiful to make explicit the thesis of the flower as being, then there are ways to attend to those same acts and what is given in them through practical and aesthetic reflections that lead to corresponding attitudes. While it is certainly possible to relate to phenomena theoretically, which can mean in a phenomenological attitude, it is also possible to relate to them practically and aesthetically, i.e., in different attitudes.

On the basis of this plural, often-unnoticed aspect of the Husserlian notions of attitude, one answer to the question of what connects Guenther's and Al-Saji's accounts is that they adopt attitudes defined phenomenologically; attitudes that display interests in the given, or manners of relating to phenomena, that a general phenomenology of constitution classifies as distinct though interrelated; respectively practical and affective attitudes. The broad question "what is phenomenological about critical phenomenology" can be reformulated as follows: what kinds of attitudes does critical phenomenology employ?

One of the strengths of critical phenomenology may be the plurality of attitudes it adopts, not just in each of its instantiations but in what concerns the variety of thinkers it can accommodate under the umbrella of its community. However, if Guenther's version of critical phenomenology is primarily practical while Al-Saji's is affective and, as such, does not commit to transformative ends in the same way Guenther does, such a plurality of attitudes may also harbor a tension internal to critical phenomenology. This difficulty motivates a turn to Husserl's own account of how various attitudes relate to each other and of how they relate to the phenomenological attitude, or indeed to phenomenology in general.

## I. PHENOMENOLOGY AND ITS MANY ATTITUDES

While there is only one pure theoretical attitude, Husserl uses a multitude of other terms to describe the theoretical, practical, and aesthetic attitudes. In *Ideas II,* for example, he refers to the practical as a personalist, motivational, or "spiritual" attitude (1989, 199). The main distinction between the natural and phenomenological attitudes allows for many further differentiations. Within the natural attitude, I may be interested in the world in a multitude of ways, including some, like the naturalist, which serve narrower, theoretical purposes. Importantly, while the phenomenological attitude is sharply set apart from any regional scientific endeavor, it is still a theoretical attitude. As a science, then, Husserlian

phenomenology considers the most important sphere of reason to be judgment, not axiology or praxis. For Husserl, judgment has a clear privilege over valuing and willing: only acts of judging are objectifying acts in the strong sense of the term. In other words, to value and to will is always dependent on doxic theses, even if they are only implicit. This shows that the relation between different attitudes, including the phenomenological one, has to be determined by the relation between spheres of reason themselves.

A first important consideration is the dependence of valuative and volitive acts on acts of judgment. This dependence explains why only judgment can be studied in isolation through an abstractive process which brackets valuing and willing.[7] However, this was always meant as a temporary limitation, and Husserl (2014) constantly notes that much remains to be learned from investigating the valuative and volitive spheres (277-79). In *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, Husserl spells out the methodological reasons for his own initial limitation to judgment. There are three different meanings to the word *logos*: speaking (*Reden*), thinking (*Denken*), and what is thought (*Gedachtes*). The second is the crucial one, since it signifies both reason itself and rational thinking (Husserl 1969, 18-19/1974, 22). Importantly, with these descriptions Husserl clarifies that *scientific thinking*, which must guide a science of *logos*, is only one of the specific characters of reason; "thought" in general—he puts the word in brackets—is much broader than judgment and must be attended to as "the frame within which the specifically logical must be isolated" (1969, 26/1974, 30). In other words, there is much more to *Denken* than its scientific lane. Yet Husserl goes on, after such an announcement, to nonetheless quite rapidly limit himself to judgment, thereby isolating the logical, as is the aim of the book. Immediately after having enumerated judicative, valuing and practical reason, he further specifies:

> If we follow the signification of the word logos which is the richest in content and has been, so to speak, raised to a higher power, namely reason, and if we also give pre-eminence to *scientific reason*, we have already thereby delimited at the same time a distinctive sphere of acts and significations, precisely as a sphere to which science, as a rational activity, relates particularly. Scientific thinking, the continual activity of the scientist, is *judicative* thinking: not just any judicative thinking, but one that is formed, ordered, connected, in certain manners—according to final ideas of reason (26/30).

For Husserl, it is because genuine science must be restricted to investigating the pure possibilities of rational life, because it must be free from any "restriction to the factual," that scientific thinking is judicative and not valuative or volitive. It is also because of the centrality of judicative thinking for science that later in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, when Husserl mentions the need for an expansion of logic to "the whole positional sphere," such an expansion would still maintain only a theoretical interest in the spheres of valuing and

[7] This peculiarity of willing in particular, namely that it cannot be studied in isolation, amazes Husserl in his lectures on ethics from 1920. He writes: "But the essence of willing is so wonderful that it cannot, like judging, have its truth in isolation" [*Aber so wunderbar ist das Wesen des Wollens, dass es nicht wie das Urteilen seine Wahrheit in der Isolierung haben kann*] (2004, 252, author's translation).

willing (Husserl 1969, 135/1974, 140).[8] The new doctrines of reason emerging thereby are pure axiology and a pure theory of practice; though they turn their attention to other spheres of thinking, they still bracket specific acts of the same kinds. Simply put, as pure sciences, pure axiology and praxis must be as equally free from acts of valuing and willing as formal logic. Nevertheless, despite Husserl's own emphasis, if pre-eminence is no longer given to scientific thinking, the broader signification of the word *logos* can re-enter the stage. Husserl himself does also discuss, after all, the possibility not just of an expansion of scientific thinking to valuative and volitional acts but of distinctly practical and aesthetic attitudes.

The aesthetic attitude involves feelings of value, but also sensory and emotive experiences, such as joy, pain, love, or pleasure. In *First Philosophy,* Husserl gives the example of a botanist looking at a flower who could thereby be theoretically interested in it or aesthetically interested the same object (*Gegenstand*). For Husserl, if there is a change of interest from the theoretical to the aesthetic and vice versa, there is also a change of attitudes; the flower can be experienced as bearing natural properties, but it can also be experienced as beautiful, or as having a pleasant smell (2019, 303/1996, 99). Importantly, aesthetic experience is originarily a feeling and occurs at an affective level. Accordingly, while it is a law of essence that any valuative act can be made doxically thematic, such that the flower can be now posited to *be* beautiful, such explicit positing is in no way necessary for the experience of the flower as beautiful to be possible, nor can the sense of my feeling of value be reduced to the doxic proposition "the flower *is* beautiful."[9] For Husserl, experiencing the world and the objects given in it as in some manner valuable, in this aesthetic or affective attitude, consists in an entire sphere of what it means to "think"—or of *logos* in the second sense of the term.

The practical attitude, closely related to the personalist attitude in *Ideas II,* centers on acts of willing, desiring, or wishing instead of on acts of valuing. For this reason, it is sometimes identified with the natural attitude itself, as it simply refers to the manner in which a person habitually posits and strives to realize various ends in her personal world of praxis, or in the lifeworld. In the practical attitude, the ego is a fully concrete person who is simply living through her multiple activities and levels of passivity.[10] An interesting further differentiation within the practical attitude itself, however, which Husserl (2004) sketches in his lectures on ethics from the 1920s, is that there is also an *ethical* attitude which, contra the naïveté of the personalist one, involves reflection on praxis (244-58). That Husserl develops a specifically ethical attitude brings him much closer to critical phenomenology than his description of a broadly practical attitude in *Ideas II* does, since what is distinctive about

[8] Husserl (1969) writes: "Now it is instructive to note also that what we have said about judging and judgment-sense holds good for the *whole sphere of positional consciousness.*" He continues: "This has great significance, because it opens up the possibility of broadening the idea of *formal logic to include a formal axiology and a formal theory of practice*" (136).

[9] Husserl (2014) makes this most clear in *Ideas I*: "Each "posit," e.g., each wish-posit, can thus be transformed into a doxic posit . . . and a wish-posit" (233).

[10] See notably paragraph 49 of *Ideas II,* "The personalistic atttitude versus the naturalistic" (Husserl 1989, 183-222).

ethics is that it requires a reflection on the motives of value guiding the will. This attitude practically reflects on how these values act as norms that standardize action and does so by turning to the web of motivations making up personal and social life (Husserl 2014, 234). Importantly, this is still no transcendental attitude, since it does not bracket valuing and willing but on the contrary evaluates the specific practical possibilities of a person. The ethical attitude therefore involves a type of reflection that is moved neither by pure nor theoretical interests but by distinctly practical ones. For Husserl, value motives and posited ends are reflected on but not doxically neutralized—their accompanying doxic theses are not suspended—since the practical goal is precisely to figure out what to do given those specific circumstances, and not to determine what are the *a priori* structures of valuing and willing in general. This would be the task of pure axiology and praxis, not of personalist ethics.

In sum, what Husserl (2014) establishes as "the possibility, indeed, the necessity" of a theory *of* praxis and value, expanding from an initial focus on judgment to other spheres of reason, quickly turns into the broader and difficult question of the meaning of phenomenology *as* praxis (234). When Husserlian phenomenology refrains from bracketing all acts of valuing and willing in order to access the field of pure lived experience, and instead continues to have practical and affective interests, new attitudes emerge.

## II. GUENTHER BETWEEN HUSSERL AND FOUCAULT: ON PHENOMENOLOGY AS PRAXIS

Guenther (2020) describes and employs phenomenology as praxis and, more specifically, as a "hybrid phenomenological practice," because it targets not just transcendental structures of consciousness but "quasi-transcendental social structures" (15). The latter include though are not limited to patriarchy, white supremacy, heteronormativity, and settler colonialism. Importantly, the "quasi" modifies the transcendental in order to account for the contingent and specifically oppressive historical genesis of such structures, along with their sedimentation and normativity.[11] To the extent that the "ultimate goal of critical phenomenology is not just to interpret the world, but also to change it," Guenther contends that, as its practitioners, we should not restrict ourselves to engaging with what is invariant in lived experience but must pay phenomenological attention to historically situated, specific circumstances (16). The question is what such phenomenological attention amounts to and whether and how it also adopts a Husserlian account of the phenomenological attitude.

[11] The sense in which I use "normativity" in this paper is distinct from normalization, which is prominently used in fields like disability studies, feminist ethics, and queer theory, and as such is distinct also from the Foucauldian concept of normalizing power. Rather, my use of normativity simply refers to the positing of a basic value as the norm of a given activity, i.e., the adherence to this norm as the "good" to be realized. It tracks Husserl's (1970) efinition of normativity in the *Logical Investigations* and as it evolves in particular in his digression to the 1920 lectures on ethics (34; 2004, 321-62). Though Husserl also speaks of normalization (*Normalisierung*), and while normativity clearly contributes to normalization, i.e., the positing of a specific norm can itself be normalized, it is normativity that this paper mainly discusses.

Does the investigation of quasi-transcendental structure require a continued description of transcendental ones? If Guenther works with both the transcendental and the quasi-transcendental, as she comes to confirm in her paper published in this volume, then the question turns to how exactly critical phenomenology continues to use a phenomenological method while also working in what can be conceived as a practical attitude. The notion of attitude becomes very useful in clarifying not just what is phenomenological about phenomenology, but whether what is critical about it entails a rejection of the possibility of a pure phenomenological attitude. Unlike an approach that would follow Merleau-Ponty in pointing to the impossibility of completing the phenomenological reduction and of accessing the realm of pure consciousness, the alliance of the phenomenological attitude in the Husserlian sense with a different, practical attitude, might be precisely what Guenther means by a hybrid phenomenological practice.

Guenther's account of quasi-transcendental structures, however, is similar to a Foucauldian stance and, specifically, to Foucault's version of the Husserlian notion of the historical *a priori* that Husserl develops mainly in the *Crisis* texts (Foucault 1972, 142-48).[12] Importantly, Guenther echoes Foucault's transformed account more than Husserl's because the "quasi-transcendental" historicizes the *a priori* further than Husserl ever did. As Burt C. Hopkins (2005) notes, what is most important for Husserl with this historical *a priori* is that it demonstrates not a contradiction between contingency and necessity but "the inseparable connection between the *meaning* [Sinn] proper to the ideal *a priori* that is the defining characteristic of objective knowledge and the historicity of this meaning's origination" (180). For Husserl, the historical *a priori* does not compromise the sharp distinction between forms of essence, whether formal or material, and historically specific norms, values, or practices. Rather, historical apriority concerns the teleological structure of sense (*Sinn*) itself and accordingly recognizes its historical origination as inseparable from its ideality (Husserl 1954, 380-83; 553).

By contrast, what Foucault describes in *The Archeology of Knowledge* and what Guenther proposes as "quasi-transcendental structures" is no defining characteristic of objective knowledge. Rather, both think that conditions for the validity of propositions, or, for Foucault, the conditions for the positivity of discourse, are epoch-specific. Foucault (1972) writes: "what I mean by the term is an a priori that is not a condition of validity for judgments, but a condition of reality for statements." He further describes it as "an a priori not of truths that might never be said, or really given in experience, but the a priori of a history that is given, since it is that of things actually said" (127). Guenther would agree with Foucault here, since her interest is also in those structures which, contra formal ones, have no jurisdiction independent of contingence, as he puts it. The interest of Foucault is for the real, not the ideal in a Husserlian sense: the structures one might find to be binding in a form of discourse are not revealed by adopting a pure phenomenological attitude, because their "apriority" and invariance has historical boundaries; their apriority itself has a history. What Guenther describes as quasi-transcendental structures function similarly.

[12] See the whole chapter section "The Historical *a priori* and the Archive." Foucault does not make explicit mention of Husserl, but the reference is nonetheless clear.

At the same time, Guenther is also a phenomenologist. She does retain the Husserlian phenomenological concept of constitution, notably, and thereby finds herself between Husserl and Foucault, as it were, juggling an acknowledgment of what "makes the lived experience of consciousness possible and meaningful" at a transcendental level, and the recognition that power shapes the constitution of sense in all its strata, even in the simplest cases of external perceptions (2019a, 11). Patriarchy, for example, certainly has a history and is thus in a sense "contingent," yet as a quasi-transcendental structure, it prescribes, or rather structures, in ways that can be described phenomenologically, both forms of perceiving and manners of givenness.

For Guenther (2021), there is a difference between forms of consciousness described by "classical" phenomenology and those specific forms of patriarchal consciousness that critical phenomenology is interested in. This difference would seem to require different methods of description: describing the essential forms of perceiving, feeling, imagining, acting, and describing the historically specific patriarchal "ways of perceiving, feeling, imagining, acting." Guenther's position can then be read as another revised historical *a priori* invested in the idea that there are regularities to be described in socio-historically generated manners of being directed at the world and objects given in it. This is not quite a Husserlian position, because it is interested in the quasi-transcendental; nor is it fully Foucauldian, because it remains committed to the phenomenological notions of intentionality and the constitution of sense. Guenther's (2019b) article "Seeing Like a Cop: A Critical Phenomenology of Whiteness as Property" provides a very clear example of this: there are regularities to perceptual practices of suspicious surveillance which are based on the protection of whiteness as property and involve the exposure of targeted others to state violence. Such a phenomenological description of a manner of perceiving and of its violent effects is simultaneously meant to disrupt that same manner of perceiving. This is a new method for describing the historical *a priori* with the intent of transforming what it describes.

A further key implication of Guenther's (2021) hybrid practice is that this praxis is an ethical one; crucial to the method is "an ethical orientation toward practices of freedom." It aims for transformations that are guided by specific values, guided by the will to make things "less wrong, less harmful, less oppressive" (19). Guenther even goes as far as to call freedom "not just contingently preferable to oppression" but "an *a priori* good" (14). This interestingly makes her approach akin to what Husserl sketches, in his 1920 lectures on ethics, as an ethical attitude. Such an attitude is distinct from a broadly construed practical attitude, or simply from the natural attitude, specifically because it involves reflection on and critique of the value motives and ends that guide any activity (Husserl 2004, 246-47). At the same time, the ethical attitude is distinct from the transcendental attitude because it purposefully does not neutralize all positions (whether doxic, axiological or practical). Rather, since the aim of the ethical attitude is to evaluate what a person should do in the specific circumstances of her life, it requires consideration for personal limitations to what

would otherwise be much broader practical possibilities.[13] Perhaps most importantly, the ethical attitude thereby describes what it means to be resolved to given ends and to be motivated by given values, while being reflective about how those same values and ends standardize action. This reflected life is an ethical one, precisely because of its striving toward self-transparency not just about what positions are taken but about whether their normativity is justified, or, for Husserl, whether it is rational. As such, the ethical attitude can describe Guenther's own approach to critique as analysis of power but also provide the frame for a phenomenological self-critique of value-commitments. Making a similar point, Guenther cites Iris Marion Young's (1990) definition of critical theory, which in some surprising ways resonates with Husserl:

> Normative reflection must begin from historically and socially specific circumstances because there is nothing but what is, *the given, the situated interest in justice,* from which to start (5, quoted in Guenther 2021, 13, her emphasis).

Consider these passages from Husserl's (2004) lectures on ethics:

> What should I do, what does my life-situation require of me as what should be (*das Gesollte*) done in the here and now? (7, author's translation).

> It belongs to all ethical wills and doings that they are not a naïve doing, nor a naïve rational will, but that the same rational thing is willed in the consciousness of its normativity (*Normhaftigkeit*) and is also motivated by the normativity (246-47, author's translation).

This paper cannot address the complex question of the relation between Husserl's ethics and critical theory. However, it does propose that if Guenther calls critical phenomenology a hybrid practice, it could also be understood as shifting between two different attitudes: the phenomenological and the ethical; one interested in transcendental structures of consciousness, the other in the specificities of different lifeworlds, while at the same time being committed to a series of situated posited ends, including to the reduction of harm and the striving toward liberation or freedom.

[13] Husserl makes this point not just in his lectures on ethics but in *Ideas II,* where he writes about the spiritual "I can" and the notion of practical possibility as irreducible to physical possibility but limited to what a person would or would not usually do. He writes: "'I could do it'—that is the neutrality modification of the action and the practical possibility derived from it. 'Yet I could not do it'—I am lacking the original consciousness of being able to do this action or of having the power for this action (which, even in the case of a fictional action, is an originary non-neutralized consciousness); this action contradicts the kind of person that I am, my way of letting myself be motivated" (1989, 277/1952, 265). This focus on the person and her abilities, personality, and environment, has led to an identification of Husserl's ethics as a personalist one, where living an ethical life is a matter of living one's "best possible life" (Husserl 2004, 244; Melle 2007; Peucker 2008; Heinämaa 2014).

The precise relation between the ethical and phenomenological attitudes, however, remains an open question. Husserl himself never clarifies this rapport, in part because the notion of the ethical attitude is under-defined, and because his ethical thinking in general is never systematically developed but only presented through lectures and unpublished manuscripts.[14] In turning to Guenther we may ask: does her descriptive practice targeting quasi-transcendental structures really need to be complemented by a description of transcendental structures? The answer seems to be affirmative, even if the precise meaning of "transcendental" remains to be determined.[15] While Guenther (2021) speaks of critical phenomenology not as a science but as a praxis, she does also recognize that there are "necessary but insufficient" meanings of critique, including transcendental inquiry, to be found in "classical phenomenology" (10). This lack of sufficiency is what motivates a turn to what can be called an "ethical attitude," but it does not efface the necessity of a transcendental critique of reason that would determine its essential features. The meaning of the purity of such inquiry, and while the sharpness of the distinction between the natural and phenomenological attitudes, are matters of debate that cannot be settled here. Nevertheless, an ethical attitude does turn to the given, describe manners of givenness and forms of intentionality, understand intentional acts to be motivated and not caused, recognize that phenomenological perception of lived experience is possible without reducing it to inner perception, and understand practical possibility in terms of the lived body and its correlated environment. In other words, insofar as the ethical attitude continues to use core phenomenological concepts, it is not foreclosing but on the contrary seems to be requiring the possibility of adopting various attitudes, including the phenomenological one.

In short, in the striking words of Foucault (1972) himself, admittedly in a very different context: "The formal *a priori* and the historical *a priori* share neither the same level nor the same nature: if they intersect, it is because they occupy two different dimensions" (144).[16] Translating this back to Husserl's vocabulary: formal investigation of the spheres of reason may lead to forms of essence, differentiating for example between forms of perceiving and valuing, but the geneses of historically specific circumstances and their regularities can only

[14] Husserl's lectures on ethics are published in his *Einleitung in die Ethik. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1920 und 1924* (Hua 37), and most of his unpublished manuscripts of the same period (from after the war onwards) are collected in the *Grenzprobleme der Phänomenologie* (Hua 42).

[15] One ambiguity of Guenther's hybrid practice is indeed whether the transcendental inquiry that accompanies a turn to quasi-transcendental structures entails that the phenomenological attitude is a *pure* phenomenological attitude. While the meaning of "purity" changes throughout Husserl's work, and needs not mean abstraction from concrete or factual circumstances, the difficulty of establishing the relation between the phenomenological attitude as a (possibly pure) theoretical attitude and the ethical attitude as a practical one reflects the challenge of critical phenomenology itself as an investigation which aims both at description and transformation. While there is clearly a sense in which Guenther's hybrid practice means that the phenomenological attitude itself needs to be ethically deployed, there is a difference between an ethical phenomenological attitude and a phenomenologically conceived ethical praxis, i.e., an ethical attitude. Importantly, these questions will be asked very differently by Al-Saji.

[16] The translation has been modified to better illustrate the contrast between the two kinds of *a prioris*.

be approached in attitudes that do not bracket those same circumstances, and as such are not performing the universal *epoché,* even if they are reflexive, as is the ethical attitude. In this sense, there is no need to choose between "classical" and "critical" phenomenology; on the contrary, it can be understood as a strength of the critical phenomenological approach that it is interested in both transcendental and quasi-transcendental structures. Through a renewed investigation of both kinds of structures, phenomenology, shifting between a plurality of attitudes, can continue to clarify its subject matter.[17]

## III. AL-SAJI AND THE FANONIAN PHENOMENOLOGY OF AFFECT

There is another attitude to consider, which further strengthens the idea of critical phenomenology as employing a plurality of attitudes. If Guenther understands critical phenomenology primarily as a praxis, Al-Saji develops of a phenomenology of affect that can analogously be read as adopting a primarily affective orientation—that is, neither a theoretical nor a practical one. In her lectures at the 2019 *Collegium Phaenomenologicum,* Al-Saji develops a Fanonian phenomenology of affect and touch. Referencing a passage from the last chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*, she cites: "we need to touch all the wounds that score the black livery" [*nous avons besoin de toucher du doigt toutes les plaies qui zèbrent la livrée noire*] (2019a, 7; Fanon 1967, 187). For Fanon, this "need" is related to what he identifies as the threat to Black intellectuals that they become mired by universals. The danger is for the specificity of Black experience to become lost to universal and overly theoretical, intellectualized claims, including theories on violence, for example. With this passage, Fanon is suggesting that such a problematic universal standpoint can be avoided if the wounds of colonialism are "touched" instead of observed from afar. He states as an explicit goal of his writing that it aims to "feel from within [*ressentir du dedans*] the despair of the

[17] Duane D. Davis (2020), in his piece "The Phenomenological Method" in *50 Concepts for a Critical* Phenomenology*, suggests that in *Ideas I,* Husserl's use of the term *überschiebung* (overlapping) to describe the relation between the natural and phenomenological attitudes, is key to understanding how the radical distinction between both attitudes does not preclude their close connection, overlapping, or intercrossing (6). If the phenomenological attitude targets "objects as meant" or "objects as intended" all the while suspending their doxic theses, its targets indeed "overlap" with those objects that appear to me in the natural attitude. Something similar could be said of the ethical attitude: even if we maintain a distinction between it and the phenomenological, or even it and the natural, insofar as it involves practical reflection, the "objects" it targets—the intended objects of my wills and valuations—are no different from those that appear to me in the natural attitude when I am not questioning them (7). In her 2018 article "The Difference of Feminist Phenomenology: The Case of Shame," Bonnie Mann provides another reference point for understanding what moving between attitudes might be: the idea of oscillation she takes up from Beauvoir. This oscillation moves "from the most concrete, particular, and located events and perspectives, to the general features of human experience, and back again" (57). Moving between the phenomenological and the ethical attitudes specifies what such a movement might entail: not quite an oscillation between the general and the particular but between the phenomenological and the practical; this indeed does not mean finding the pure experience "behind" the contingent but could be read as changing attitudes to look at the same, concrete circumstances.

man of color confronting the white man."[18] He also writes, though the tactile meaning is lost in translation, "In this work I have made a point to convey [*toucher*] the misery of the Black man. Physically [*Tactilement*] and affectively" (Fanon 1967, 86; see Al-Saji 2019b, 19). In short, a Fanonian phenomenology of affect warns of the risks of jumping to new arches and universal principles. On Al-Saji's reading, this is in part why Fanon instead wants to take the time to attend to the concrete and specific wounds of colonialism; to touch them, dwell on them, feel them from within. The advantage of reading this as an affective attitude, then, is that it accounts for how this is no practical attitude—it is not committed to transformative ends from the start—and how it can still affectively intervene, as it were, or disrupt, manners of perceiving and feeling.

Such fore-grounding of affect involves feeling (*ressentir*) or enduring (*éprouver*) more than looking at, more than turning into a visual spectacle, or, on the contrary, altogether forgetting what Fanon describes in "The North African Syndrome" as the continuing burn of the colonial past (2006, 12; see Al-Saji 2019a, 3).[19] In contrast to Guenther, Fanon's phenomenology of affect dwells and waits: it is not a praxis aimed at transformation. As such, dwelling in a present that carries the affective past, and specifically the colonial past, preserves a deep ambivalence with respect to the future. By focusing on this touching of Black pain that Fanon announces as one of the goals of *Black Skin, White Masks,* Al-Saji seems to be bracketing the entire debate surrounding the Fanonian description of decolonization as having to begin with a *tabula rasa,* a blank slate for a new humanism and a new man. In other words, this emphasis on dwelling is bracketing how to read Fanon's "narrative of liberation" (Taylor 1989). Al-Saji (2019b) herself explicitly contrasts her work with that of David Scott and Fred Moten and their insistence on the potential for liberation (12). Her approach is also different from the work of Lewis C. Gordon, whose reading of Fanon, like Al-Saji's, focuses on Black lived experience though still reads him as a revolutionary existential humanist who, identifying the true crisis of European Man in its racism and colonialism, "demands a forward leap on the question and questioning of humanity" (1995, 38). It is significant that Al-Saji does not take this second step. To dwell is precisely not to leap. The result is that the cumbersome normative question surrounding Fanonian teleology and universal dialectics is, while not ignored, at least reborn, reformulated, re-localized, even "somatized" in the subtler though no less dramatic movement of touching the wounds of colonialism.

Importantly, dwelling is also not, strictly speaking, an activity. In a related manner, Al-Saji shows that the level at which Fanon speaks of affect and pain remains well below that of intentional acts of constitution. It is in this context that she turns to Husserl, reading him through Fanon to critically retool two phenomenological concepts: sensings (*Empfindnisse*)

[18] The translation has been modified not to lose the meaning of "*ressentir du dedans*" as akin to an internal sensation, pointing at once to psychological and affective dimensions.

[19] Al-Saji cites Fanon's (2006) original French: "*un passé cuisant*" from "Le 'syndrome nord africain'" in *Pour la révolution africaine*.

and the affective relief.[20] The key aspect of specifically touch sensings for Al-Saji is precisely that, though "they are preconditions for the Body to become an organ of will ("I can"), touch sensings fail to reach the level of explicit egoic activity" (2019a, 14; Husserl 1989, 152). Sensings are non-objectivating; rather, they found the lived body through sensibility. This is what Husserl (1989) calls a "hyletic substrate" (*hyletische Unterlage*) in *Ideas II*: the basic layer of experience which founds all objectivities (*Gegenständlichkeiten*) through varying degrees of mediacy (160). Hyle is a term Husserl uses to designate the "stuff" (*Stoff*) that gives its content to any intentional act animating it, forming a unity of sense. In his *Analyses on Passive Syntheses,* he develops a notion of affective relief that complicates this prior account of hyletic data, no longer pictured as points. Sensings are now understood to form an entire field, which importantly is not a mere plane, as if it were reducible to the surface of the skin. Rather, it involves an affective relief, that is, a whole landscape registering the depth of sensation both materially and temporally, with varying degrees of affective pull (2001, 212).

Additionally, if it is the wounds of the colonial past that are touched by Fanon's writing, then a phenomenology of racialization is not just a phenomenology of affect but of time. Turning to this temporal question, Al-Saji coins the term *colonial duration* to account for enduring presence at an affective and bodily level. Colonial duration carries the affective weight of the past *as past* in the present, not just as a sedimented social structure but in "experiences" such as unlocalizable pain, affective pathologies, and other disrupting bodily affects. Interestingly, Al-Saji here breaks with Husserl, turning to Bergson instead, because affective weight has *longue durée.* Specifically, the colonial past is present as past without the need for an act of remembrance; it does not rely on subjective activity or even passivity to be present. It is there materially in the pain. As Al-Saji (2019c) concludes her *Collegium* lectures, echoing the words of Édouard Glissant, "to live under the weight of colonial duration is to experience a 'painful sense of time'" (23).

Yet the key to this entire framework of affect and time is that the rhythms of such colonial duration can be sabotaged, even interrupted. Al-Saji (2019a) speaks of how Fanon's writing "resuscitates" colonial wounds as "feelings," enlivening a past that would otherwise be seen as dead (11). I read her phenomenology of affect and touch as letting "dead time" endure, *laisser durer le temps mort*, not for directly practical or theoretical reasons but affective ones, indeed with the sole initial aim of dwelling on wounds. Though Al-Saji does not use this language, such dwelling and waiting can be understood as an affective attitude because it apprehends what is felt through feeling itself instead of through theoretical or practical reason. Feeling can be broadly understood as including its basic psychosomatic

[20] There is an important difference between what Al-Saji herself cites as sensible feelings and drives from "the sphere of the heart" and those coming from the sphere of judgment (Husserl 2001, 150; Al-Saji 2019b, 2). Quite interestingly, in his lectures on ethics, Husserl describes the most basic value-feelings as analogous to sensings; they too are the most basic stratum to constitution, now in the sphere of valuing instead of judging broadly construed (as doxic positing) (see Husserl 2004, 260-01; 1988, 205). Though this sphere of feeling still has a doxic substrate, Husserl does write of this sphere that it involves "*ein Gefühlsmeinen mit einem sozusagen fühlenden Erfahren, einem fühlenden Selbst-Haben des Wertes, des Wertes selbst in seiner vollen*" [the meaning of a feeling with a so to speak fulfilling experience, a fulfilling self-having of the value, of the value itself in its fullness] (224, author's translation). In other words, values are value-feelings which can be more or less fulfilled, as something *meant* in that feeling, by an experience of value.

sense along with emotions, feeling (*Gefühl*) or what Husserl calls a felt disposition (*Gemüt*). Though Husserl mostly describes affective orientations through the example of aesthetic feelings of value, such as appreciation for the beauty of a flower, this can be extended to any feeling, indeed to the whole affective sphere. The key aspect of the kind of the approach Al-Saji reads in Fanon is that it occurs at a passive level, prior to the activity that would be involved in liberatory praxis. Letting painful affects *endure*—a word particularly well-suited to this case—can be disruptive at a passive level.[21] This means the idea of "dead time" is not just opposed to the liveliness of the colonial lifeworld: it also suspends its temporality. It is literally a time-out, a time for a break. This is a path of sensibility, affect, and passivity, a path through affective reliefs themselves, toward the interruption of colonial duration.

The relation between affect and time is thus crucial, but so is the relation between time and possibility. For Al-Saji, colonial duration forecloses "the very structure of practical possibility." This statement is much stronger than the thought that the practical possibilities of the colonized are determined by the colonial world. Rather, the realm of practical possibilities itself is being killed off—there is no room to act for the colonized. And it is precisely "the *affective relief* of the present" that is "left without leeway" (2019a, 3). Between the I and the affective pull of objects, there is supposed to be such *Spielraum*, room to breathe, to play, to will, to desire, to choose, to feel, to resist.

Al-Saji (2019b) references specifically practical possibilities in this passage, but it is also implicitly the case when she speaks of how Fanon's writing "permits us to be conscious of '*une possibilité d'exister*' [a possibility of existence] other than what colonialism projects for us" (18; Fanon 1967, 100/97). Simply put, practical possibilities are foreclosed but consciousness of alternatives is not. Al-Saji (2019b) makes a similar point when she writes that touch, in Fanon, "can take the form of interruptive transport and nostalgic re-memory of foreclosed possibilities" (18). These possibilities, while presently closed off, are not impossible to be felt. Al-Saji's (2019c) interpretation of Fanon's description of "explosion" in *Black Skin, White Masks* speaks of the same thing: "the *possibility* of exploding (and not just the reality of explosion) *has yet to be created*" (2, Al-Saji's emphasis). Again, it is the very possibility of existing differently that is lacking. Fanon too makes a similar point when commenting on how "utopian" it is to expect of the Black or the Arab that they integrate abstract values to their worldview if they hardly ever have enough to eat. He writes: "in the absolute sense, nothing stands in the way of such things. Nothing—except that the people in question lack the opportunities [*les intéressés n'en ont pas la possibilité*] (1967, 96/1952, 93). The tone here is almost humorous: nothing stands in their way, apart from the fact that circumstances make it impossible. In this specific case, it is the affect of hunger that forecloses the possible. Al-Saji (2019c) takes up this passage and concludes: "The affect of the colonized calls for more than nutrition; it calls for inventing sociality and ways of living and dying, on one's own terms, from the reconfigured ruin of foreclosed and dead possibilities" (6).

[21] The verb "to endure" is particularly well suited here, because it translates the French word "*éprouver*" as much as "*durer*" which respectively mean to feel and to last.

With this revealing statement, Al-Saji has moved from the affective sphere to that of praxis, though from a different perspective than Guenther. This is a pivotal point in her writing, because it shows the close connection between affect and what are distinctly practical possibilities. The distinction between affective and practical attitudes accounts for why the foreclosure of practical possibilities forecloses also the whole sphere of acts of the will—and, crucially, it also explains why an affective attitude may have to be initially adopted. In a sense, the point Al-Saji is making is that *praxis is not an option* for the colonized, but that affect can never be foreclosed in the same way. Pain can always be felt, even if action is rendered impossible.

What Fanon wants his patients to acquire is the possibility to choose, even between activity or passivity, in face of what turns out to be the real source of the conflict: not their unconscious, or the so-called inferiority complex, but social structures (1967, 100/1952, 97). In other words, he wants them to enter the realm of praxis, to no longer be governed by paralyzing affects. A turn to the notion of attitudes shows that what Al-Saji calls the sabotage of colonial duration, a dwelling on the wounds of colonialism, turns out to move between affect and praxis; in the end, it does target those same structures which Guenther calls "quasi-transcendental" though from a different attitude.

## IV. CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY: TURNING TO PHENOMENA THROUGH A PLURALITY OF ATTITUDES

The natural attitude is not fixed or unalterable but on the contrary is a developmental phenomenon, constantly changing along with the environment of a person. There are ethical, practical, affective modes to the natural attitude that can be transformative for the natural attitude itself. One can indeed gain many phenomenological insights while remaining in it. Gail Weiss (2016) discusses this point in her article "De-Naturalizing the Natural Attitude: A Husserlian Legacy to Social Phenomenology," showing the diversity and frequency of experiences which can disrupt the natural attitude from within, as it were. She references, as an example, how the Rodney King and Trayvon Martin cases "profoundly disrupted the natural attitude of many white Americans" by putting in question their assumptions about fairness and justice in the United States (13). At the same time, it should be noted that another feature of the natural attitude is that it quite forcefully resists radical change. Weiss (2016) nonetheless concludes:

> These experiences and these conversations are precisely what are needed, not to eradicate the natural attitude, for that is neither possible nor desirable, but rather to guarantee that it will continue to transform, rather than remain fixed, in response to new experiences that pose challenges to it. This, for me, is precisely the promise of the not so natural, natural attitude, as Husserl first described it over a century ago (. . . ). Rather than viewing the natural attitude, and even phenomenology for that matter, as an outdated concept and method that must be jettisoned in favor of newer terms and newer methods that are explicitly geared toward our current experiences, I

> believe they still have their whole lives before them, waiting for us to take them up in our own distinctive ways and put them to work. (14)

One way to put the natural attitude to work is to explore its many modes, shifting not just between regions of being, but between spheres of reason—from how and what we judge, to how and what we value and will, and even to how and what we feel. Guenther's and Al-Saji's respective approaches to critical phenomenology show how ethical and affective attitudes can continue to transform the natural attitude itself.

*Acknowledgements*: I want to thank Lisa Guenther and Alia Al-Saji for our conversations at the *Collegium* itself. Thank you to Mercer Gary for precious feedback on a draft version of this paper. I also thank the anonymous reviewers for their very helpful comments and reminders about what kinds of questions should be guiding a paper such as this.

## REFERENCES

Al-Saji, Alia. 2019a. "Touching the Wounds of Colonial Duration: Fanon, Husserl, and a Critical Phenomenology of Racialized Affect." First lecture delivered at the *Collegium Phaenomenologicum* in Città di Castello, Italy.

———. 2019b. "Fanon and a different phenomenological touch." Second lecture delivered at the *Collegium Phaenomenologicum* in Città di Castello, Italy.

———. 2019c. "Fanon, Merleau-Ponty, and the Affective Weight of Colonization." Third lecture delivered at the *Collegium Phaenomenologicum* in Città di Castello, Italy.

Davis, Duane D. 2020. "The Phenomenological Method." In *50 Concepts for a Critical* Phenomenology*, edited by Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy and Gayle Salamon, 3–10. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Derrida, Jacques. 1980. *Writing and Difference*. Translated by Alan Bass. London: Routledge.

Donohoe, Janet. 2016. *Husserl on Ethics and Intersubjectivity: From Static to Genetic Phenomenology.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Fanon, Frantz. 1952. *Peau noire, masques blancs.* Paris: Seuil.

———. 1964. *Toward the African Revolution.* Translated by Haakon Chevalier, New York: Grove Press.

———. 1967. *Black Skin, White Masks.* Translated by Charles Lam Markmann, New York: Grove Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge & Discourse on Language.* Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith, New York: Pantheon Books.

Guenther, Lisa. 2019a. "No Prisons on Stolen Land: A Critical Phenomenology of Carceral-Colonial Space," conference presented at the *Collegium Phaenomenologicum,* Città di Castello, Italy.

———. 2019b. "Seeing Like a Cop: A Critical Phenomenology of Whiteness as Property." In *Race as Phenomena,* edited by Emily Lee, 189-206. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

———. 2020. "Critical Phenomenology." In *50 Concepts for a Critical* Phenomenology*, edited by Weiss, Gail, Ann V. Murphy and Gayle Salamon, 11-16. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

———. 2021. "Six Senses of Critique For Critical Phenomenology." *Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology,* 4 (2): 5–23.

Gordon, Lewis C. 1995. *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man, An Essay on Philosophy and the Humans Sciences,* New York: Routledge.

Heinämaa, Sara. 2014. "Husserl's Ethics of Renewal: A Personalistic Approach." In *New Perspectives on Aristotelianism and Its Critics*, edited by Miira Tuominen, Sara Heinämaa, and Virpi Mäkinen, 196-212. Leiden: Brill.

Hopkins, Burt C. 2005. "Klein and Derrida on the Historicity and the Meaning of Historicity in Husserl's Crisis-Texts." *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 36 (2):179–87.

Husserl, Edmund. 1954. *Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften und die Transzendentale Phänomenologie: Eine Einleitung in die Phänomenologische Philosophie.* Edited by Walter Biemel. Haag: Martinus Nijhoss.

———. 1969. *Formal and Transcendental Logic.* Translated by Dorion Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

———.1974. *Formale und Transzendentale Logik: Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft,* Husserliana XVII. Edited by Paul Janssen. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff.

———. 1977. *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology.* Translated by Dorion Cairns. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

———. 1988. *Vorlesungen über Ethik und Wertlehre (1908-1914),* Hua XXVIII. Edited by Ullrich Melle. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

———. 1989. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution.* Translated by Richard Rokcewicz and André Schuwer. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

———. 1996. *Erste Philosophie (1923/24) Zweiter Teil,* Husserliana VIII. Edited by Samuel Ijsseling. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

———. 1999. *The Idea of Phenomenology.* Translated by Lee Hardy. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

———. 2001. *Logical Investigations, Volume I.* Translated by J. N. Findlay. New York: Routledge.

———. 2001. *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic.* Translated by Anthony J. Steinbock, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

———. 2004. *Einleitung in die Ethik. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1920 und 1924,* Hua XXXVII. Edited by Henning Peucker. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

———. 2014. *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy.* Translated by Daniel O. Dahlstrom. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

———. 2019. *First Philosophy: Lectures 1923/24 and Related Texts from the Manusripts (1920-1925),* Hua XIV. Translated by Sebastian Luft and Thane M. Naberhaus. Dordrecht: Springer.

Melle, Ullrich. 2007. "Husserl's Personalist Ethics" in *Husserl Studies* 23 (1): 1–15.

Salamon, Gayle. 2018. "What's Critical About Critical Phenomenology" in *Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology* 1: 8-17.

Taylor, Patrick M. 1989. *The Narrative of Liberation: Perspectives on Afro-Caribbean Literature, Popular Culture and* Politics. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Weiss, Gail. 2016. "De-Naturalizing the Natural Attitude: A Husserlian Legacy to Social Phenomenology" in *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology.* 47 (1): 1–16.

Weiss, Gail, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon. 2020. "Introduction: Transformative Descriptions." In *50 Concepts for a Critical* Phenomenology,* edited by Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon, xii-xvi. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Young, Iris Marion. 1990. *Justice and the Politics of Difference.* Princeton*:* Princeton University Press.

**PUNCTA**
*Journal of Critical Phenomenology*

# PROLEGOMENA TO ANY FUTURE HISTORICIZING: THE DILTHEY-HUSSERL DEBATE AND WHY IT MATTERS FOR CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY

CHRISTOPHER R. MYERS
*Fordham University*

*The question is, does history that has discovered its own meaning still have any meaning? And is it history anymore?*
— Václav Havel, "Stories and Totalitarianism"

For more than a century, phenomenology's relation to history has remained a problem for phenomenological analysis. This can in part be attributed to the circumstances surrounding the beginnings of phenomenology. As Europe moved increasingly toward world war at the turn of the 20th century, a growing consciousness of the historical relativity of all values and knowledge spread throughout the continent, leading Ernst Troeltsch to speak of the "crisis of historicism" (Rand 1964, 504-05). In this same context, Edmund Husserl framed phenomenological analysis in opposition to history. While Husserl (2002) recognized the "tremendous value" that history has to offer philosophical thinking, he believed that a purely historical reduction of consciousness necessarily results in the relativity of historical understanding itself, like a serpent that bites its own tail (280). If phenomenology was to be a genuine science, it had to attempt a phenomenological reduction which would seize upon the essence of our historical being, i.e., our essence as beings that exist within history and are inseparable from it. What was required over and beyond a historical understanding of lived experience was an analysis of the structure of historicity itself (293-94).

Since Husserl's representation of the relationship between phenomenology and history in 1911, phenomenologists have worked to re-problematize this relationship—and this includes the recent line of analysis which has taken the name "critical phenomenology." As Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon (2019) have suggested, critical phenomenology makes use of phenomenological description to analyze the ways that power relations structure our experience. Critical phenomenologists examine the socio-historical conditions behind the perceptual patterns and affective dispositions of the body, as well as the conditions behind the phenomenological attitude itself. Now, insofar as critical phenomenology concerns itself with the socio-historical conditions of phenomenological

analysis, it seems to turn back on Husserl's assessment of history, and moreover on his 1911 correspondence with Wilhelm Dilthey. While Husserl called for a phenomenology which would make intelligible the structure of historicity itself, it was Dilthey who suggested that understanding needed to be reconceived as a *hermeneutic* activity: an interpretive activity which turns back on itself and moves *between* lived experience and history.

The aim of this paper is to revisit Husserl and Dilthey's 1911 correspondence in order to develop a deeper perspective on this tendency in critical phenomenological research: the tendency to *historicize* lived experience. I argue for two theses. First, while both Husserl and Dilthey recognized that lived experience is always historically situated, they diverged in their approaches to the interpretation of historicity—Husserl adopting a *transcendental* approach, and Dilthey a *hermeneutic* approach. This divergence grew out of Husserl and Dilthey's solutions to the crisis of historicism, and it led them to adopt opposed views on the activity of historicizing. Second, while Husserl's treatment of historicity is in tension with critical phenomenology's commitment to historicizing the phenomenological attitude, Dilthey's treatment suggests that our historicity needs to be interpreted as something that is itself socially and historically conditioned. Dilthey's attempt to achieve a truly hermeneutic conception of understanding led him to represent historicizing as a source of radical possibility. Accordingly, his disagreement with Husserl offers insight for critical phenomenology's treatment of the relationship between phenomenology and history.

## DILTHEY AND THE CRISIS OF HISTORICISM

In 1873, Wilhelm Dilthey observed that Europe was undergoing a "great crisis" as a consequence of the rise of historical consciousness (quoted in Ermarth 1978, 15).[1] By "historical consciousness," Dilthey referred to the awareness that the whole of one's existence is a product of history. As historical science became increasingly prominent across Europe during the 19th century, human beings were made increasingly conscious of the historicity of all things, and were compelled to historicize every aspect of their nature: their reason, values, instincts, etc. Even knowledge itself had to be historicized, leading to the conclusion that our knowledge of history was itself something historically relative. All aspects of human life were suddenly in crisis—a situation Troeltsch would describe fifty years later as the "crisis of historicism" (Rand 1964, 504-05).

In contrast to Troeltsch—who saw no other way to counteract the crisis of historicism than by looking to the ahistorical—Dilthey believed the solution to this crisis must be sought

[1] Dilthey had made similar observations before this. As a student in the 1860's, Dilthey (1978) observed that "the problems of philosophy, history, and politics are now mutually intertwined" (15).

in historical consciousness itself.[2] This is seen in his description of "the problem posed by this epoch":

> [E]verything historical is relative in the sense that if we gather it all in consciousness, it seems to surreptitiously breed dissolution, skepticism, and impotent subjectivity. This exposes the problem posed by this epoch. What is relative must be brought into a more fundamental connection with what is universally valid . . . Surely, historical consciousness itself must contain the rules and the power for dedicating ourselves freely and with sovereignty, in the fact of the past, to a unified goal of human culture. (Dilthey 2019, 158-59)

What is distinct about Dilthey's response to the crisis of historicism is that he did not believe we could turn to an ahistorical system of thinking such as positivism or metaphysics. For Dilthey the way forward was not attempting to transcend the historicity of human life, but rather, attempting to examine the nature of historical consciousness. Such an attempt would resemble the Kantian project in its determination of the essential limitations of historical consciousness, but with a major difference: "Kant's *a priori* is fixed and dead; but the real conditions of consciousness and its presuppositions, as I grasp them, constitute a living historical process, a development" (Dilthey 1989, 500-01). Dilthey names this project a "critique of historical reason": a critique of human beings' capacity to know themselves and their history from *within* history (165).

Dilthey believed his critique of historical reason would provide an epistemological foundation for future research in the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*), i.e., future research which concerns human life, society, and history. Yet the task of this critique extended well beyond epistemology: what was in question for Dilthey was the philosophical character of *living* historically.[3] In search of something "universally valid," Dilthey identifies the starting point for such a critique as a return to lived experience (*Erlebnis*): the pre-reflective reality in which "what is there for me" is solely the content of consciousness. In the "Breslau Draft," he asserts "*the principle of phenomenality*": the principle that "[e]verything is a fact of consciousness, and accordingly is subject to the conditions of consciousness" (1989, 247). Against any metaphysical belief in an external world or the unchanging identity of the subject behind experience, Dilthey argues that "knowledge may not posit a reality that is independent of lived experience" (202). Lived experience is both the starting point and context for all possible understanding, and this includes our understanding of the past.

Yet Dilthey complicates this principle by introducing a second principle: that the psychical nexus which encompasses the facts of consciousness must be recognized as contained "in the totality of psychic life" (263-64). For Dilthey, to speak of lived experience

[2] Troeltsch (1964) attempts to counteract the crisis of historicism by turning to an ahistorical Neo-Platonism (48ff.).

[3] In his correspondence with Dilthey in 1895, Count Yorck von Wartenburg suggests that Dilthey refer to the character of being historical as "historicity." While Heidegger reads into this correspondence that it was Count Yorck von Wartenburg who recognized the true difference between the "ontical" and the "Historical," it should be emphasized that Count Yorck was attempting to designate what he saw in Dilthey's own project (Dilthey & v. Wartenburg 2020, 185-86).

as something singular is an "abstraction": lived experience exists within the movement of time, and therefore is what it is because it is a *part* of psychic life understood as an interconnected temporal *whole* (67). Lived experience is always situated within the fullness of social and historical life, and correspondingly acquires its meaning from the context of our relationships with others, our socio-cultural context, and history itself (1989, 279-84). Notice how this second principle completely transforms what Dilthey means by phenomenality (i.e., the notion that everything is a fact of consciousness) and moreover prefigures the recent emphasis made by critical phenomenologists on the socio-historical conditions of experience. While it remains the case that "what is there for me" exists solely in lived experience, it is nevertheless the case that lived experience is itself an abstraction insofar as it exists within the movement of time. Lived experience and history are related to one another as part and whole within the interconnected nexus of life itself—what Dilthey calls the *life-nexus* (*Lebenszusammenhang*).[4]

Dilthey's solution to the crisis of historicism is seen in his attempt to fundamentally reconceive of *Verstehen* (understanding). In multiple works, Dilthey identifies the foundation of the human sciences as descriptive psychology: the study of the connectedness of psychic life. This appeal to descriptive psychology has been a source of extreme confusion amongst Dilthey's readers. While some have criticized Dilthey for trying to replace empirical psychology with an introspective "armchair psychology," what Dilthey (2010) actually means by descriptive psychology is not an analysis of psychic life as an introspective reality, but rather psychic life as the *context* of understanding.[5] He writes:

> Life is the basic fact that must form the starting point of philosophy. Life is that with which we are acquainted from within and behind which we cannot go. . . . Life is historical to the degree that it is apprehended as advancing in time and as an emerging productive nexus. Life as history is possible because this process is re-created in memory, not as the production of its particulars, but as the re-creation of the nexus itself and its stages. . . . That is history. (280)

For Dilthey, descriptive psychology refers to the study of psychic life understood as "an emerging productive nexus": a nexus in which lived experience and history are related to one another as part and whole. In contrast to empirical psychology, which accepts as its starting point a distinction between subject and object, descriptive psychology analyzes life itself as the context within which lived experience emerges, and thus as a context that is intersubjective and historical from the beginning. In this way, Dilthey's descriptive psychology is founded upon a fundamental reevaluation of what understanding *is*—a reevaluation which recognizes that the "object" of understanding is the context of understanding itself. For Dilthey, understanding needs to be reconceived as a *hermeneutic* activity: an activity in which we continually turn back on the conditions of our own understanding and move *between* lived experience and history. While lived experience needs to be interpreted on the

[4] In addition to Dilthey's description of the life-nexus in his "Breslau Draft," see (1977, 35; 2010, 214-18).

[5] In particular, this criticism is made by Ebbinghaus (De Mul 2014, 187-89).

basis of our understanding of our historical situatedness, history needs to be interpreted on the basis of what is given in lived experience.[6]

For our purposes, what is most important to emphasize in Dilthey's reevaluation of understanding is that the activity of historicizing becomes a source of radical possibility. In *Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, Dilthey (2010) describes understanding as the activity of interpreting what is given to us in experience (e.g., the expressions of others, works of art, political movements, etc.) as "objectifications" of life itself (103-05).[7] Using Hegel's concept of objective spirit, Dilthey suggests that everything in the world is an objectification of life insofar as it is always already connected to us as parts of the same life-nexus. What seems to exist "outside" of us is in fact related to us within "the inner reality of life," and therefore provides the material for an understanding of the life-nexus. Dilthey describes the activity of interpreting this material as a process of "gradual elucidation":

> Lived experiences . . . seem to only give us knowledge of something singular . . . [yet] understanding overcomes this limitation of the individual lived experience . . . Understanding presupposes experience, but lived experience only becomes life-experience if understanding leads us from the narrowness and subjectivity of experiencing into the region of the whole and the general. . . . The basic relationship between lived experience and understanding is [therefore] that of mutual dependence. . . . Understanding constantly widens the range of historical knowledge . . . [while] at the same time the extension of the historical horizon makes possible the formation of ever more general and fruitful concepts. (162-7)

For Dilthey, understanding presents the possibility of experiencing beyond the narrowness of our own lived experience. By utilizing what is given in experience to acquire a sense for history, we become able to re-interpret our own experience on the basis of the lived realities of others, of society, and of history. The relationship between understanding and lived experience remains one of mutual dependence, however, insofar as our conception of history is continually re-opened by what is given to us in experience. What emerges in lived experience will change our understanding of the way things have been in the past, and thus the meaning that is contained in historical life is for Dilthey necessarily something open and indefinite.[8]

[6] Dilthey insists that such an activity must be interdisciplinary, moreover, insofar as it is only through the collective effort of the human sciences that we grasp the fullness of our hermeneutic situation.

[7] Amongst things that are given in the socio-historical world, Dilthey (1989) makes a distinction between systems of culture and external organizations (94). A system of culture is a "complex of purposes" that is formed when various individuals become related to one another through shared purposes (e.g., religion, law, and art). An external organization of society is an association of wills that is formed when individual wills unite to form a single whole: a community, a framework, a "state."

[8] While Dilthey (1989) recognizes that continual re-interpretation brings us closer to the meaning of historicity, he insists that a complete scientific account is not possible (440).

Insofar as Dilthey (2010) believed the activity of historicizing enables us to experience lived realities beyond the narrowness of our own experience, he represented historicizing as a source of radical possibility: "[h]uman beings bound and limited by the reality of life are liberated not only by art . . . but also by the understanding of the historical" (237). Yet Dilthey also went a step further than this: he suggested that we are able to experience not merely lived realities beyond our own, but lived realities of the past *precisely as they were* (i.e., "re-experiencing"). This claim has been widely criticized by 20th century hermeneutic thinkers like Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer: it assumes the past is fixed in some way, and thereby contradicts Dilthey's suggestion that the meaning of the historical nexus is open and indefinite. This claim points toward a larger problem, moreover: the tension between Dilthey's commitment to the possibility of universally valid understanding and his commitment to the historicity of all understanding (Bambach 2019, 92). Although Dilthey (1960) reconceives of understanding as a hermeneutic activity, he maintained that a genuine understanding of lived experience would need to be one that remains valid outside of our historical circumstances (233).

This tension between Dilthey's belief in the historicity of all understanding and the possibility of universally valid understanding will be discussed further below. For now, we should emphasize the genuine insight behind Dilthey's solution to the crisis of historicism. While the skeptic is ready to dismiss the possibility of understanding by appealing to our historical situatedness, Dilthey suggests that our historical situatedness is precisely what makes understanding possible. It is because we are historically situated that we have access to the life-nexus: all that we experience helps us acquire an understanding of the greater whole of historical development, and our understanding of history in turn helps us acquire a better understanding of lived experience. The immediate consequence of Dilthey's solution to the crisis of historicism is therefore that our historical situatedness becomes essential for the possibility of understanding, and that the activity of understanding itself becomes a source of possibility. By learning to historicize ourselves and our lived experience, we are able to recognize both the narrowness of our experience and the possibility of experiencing otherwise.

## HUSSERL AND THE CRISIS OF HISTORICISM

Like Dilthey, Husserl (2001) believed that the phenomenality of experience is the only genuine starting point for understanding. In the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl represents phenomenology as the description of lived experience: a self-reflective analysis in which we turn our focus from the "naïve" positing of independently existing objects to the essence of conscious experience itself (96-97). For Husserl, consciousness is always consciousness *of* something. It is *intentional* in the sense that it is always directed at some content. This implies the possibility of phenomenology as a science of intentionality, i.e., a science of the essence of what is intended in consciousness as well as the way in which is intended (127-28). What is required is a reflective turn toward the *meaning* of what we are conscious of—or as he

frames it in *Ideas I*, a "phenomenological epoché": a bracketing of the "natural attitude" and an analysis of the world as it is given (1983, 65-66).

When Dilthey (2010) read Husserl's *Logical Investigations* he described it as "epoch-making" and compared it to his own descriptive psychology (30, 34).[9] He began a correspondence with Husserl in 1905, and soon after Husserl (1977) would also recognize a kinship between Dilthey's descriptive psychology and phenomenology (25). Yet where Dilthey and Husserl remained at odds with one another was in their solutions to the crisis of historicism. This became clear with Husserl's publication of "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science" in 1911: a text that marks the first indication of what I propose we call the "Dilthey-Husserl debate."[10]

In this article Husserl argues that phenomenology is the sole means by which philosophy can become genuinely scientific, and he does this by criticizing two alternatives: naturalistic philosophy and world-view philosophy (2002, 253). By "world-view philosophy," Husserl designates a kind of philosophy which he considers a "child of historicistic skepticism": a philosophy which suggests that all sciences and philosophies are derived from the world-view of their age, and that all world-views are themselves teleologically linked in the course of history (283-86). Husserl's reference to "world-view philosophy" here is significant in that Dilthey had published an article earlier that year titled, "The Types of World-View and their Development in Metaphysical Systems." Dilthey suggests in this article that a select few world-views have served as background understandings for societies' interpretations of the meaning and sense of world, and—contra historical relativism—these world-views have their legitimacy in the fact that they are rooted in the overall structure of the life-nexus (Dilthey 2019, 258-62). While Dilthey meant for his account of world-views to propose an alternative to skepticism, Husserl evidently did not accept this conclusion. In "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science" he identifies "world-view philosophy" as the sole form of philosophy that is left after one has accepted historical relativism, and he moves to criticize it.

What is interesting is where Husserl does—and does not—include Dilthey within his discussion. As soon he turns to the crisis of historicism, Husserl makes use of several passages from Dilthey.[11] He observes with Dilthey that the rise of historical consciousness has made people lose faith in their age's values and ways of life, and he further observes that the logic of historicism can be used to relativize any science which pursues objective validity. Husserl (2002) concludes: "when historicism is consistently carried through to its conclusion, one ends up with extreme skeptical subjectivism" (280).

[9] In the following years, Dilthey would become the first prominent German philosopher to use Husserl's work in his own courses, and would even begin using the term "phenomenology" alongside "descriptive psychology" in his unpublished writings (Ermarth 1978, 197, 204).

[10] I have chosen to speak of the "Dilthey-Husserl debate" only to emphasize the significant divergence between these thinkers on the question of our concern: the limits of historicizing and the nature of historicity. Dilthey and Husserl themselves never engaged in an actual debate or public disagreement. In fact (as I hope I have made clear), Dilthey and Husserl shared much in common, and greatly admired one another's work.

[11] Specifically, Husserl (2002) makes use of passages from "The Types of World-View and Their Development in Metaphysical Systems" (279-80).

From this point Husserl asserts the need to bracket the fact of our historical situatedness, and he questions whether historical facts should have *any* pertinence to understanding whatsoever. He writes:

> The foregoing should suffice to gain the concession that—however great are the difficulties that the relationship between what obtains in the flux and objective validity . . . may pose to the clarifying understanding—the distinction and opposition must be acknowledged. (280-81)

Husserl insists upon an opposition between historical facts and objectively valid understanding, and implies that the threat of skepticism is ultimately a decisive argument against historical consciousness itself. If our awareness of the historicity of all things conflicts with the possibility of genuine understanding, then this awareness needs to be abstracted from altogether: we should pursue objective validity over against historical facts. Husserl goes on to conclude that we should set our sights on a philosophical science that does not "get bogged down in the historical" (293-94). Where "historical-critical activity" takes into consideration only what has factually existed, a genuine philosophical science would be one which carries out "the *phenomenological seizing upon essences*": a seizing of the ideal content or "essence" of what is experienced in time. This alone can constitute the foundation of a rigorous science: knowledge of what is "pure" (272-75).

It is telling that Dilthey's name drops out of Husserl's discussion the moment he begins to argue that we should abstract from what is historical. Despite the fact that Dilthey's critique of historical reason is concerned *precisely* with reconceiving of understanding in the awareness that we cannot transcend our historical situatedness, Husserl omits Dilthey's project from his focus at precisely this moment. Dilthey is considered merely in a brief footnote:

> Dilthey likewise rejects historicistic skepticism; but I fail to understand how he can believe he has obtained from his very instructive analysis of the structure and typology of world-views decisive reasons *against* skepticism. For as is argued above in the text, a human science (which is, after all, empirical) can argue neither against nor *for* anything that lays claim to objective validity. (2002, 281 n. 13)

Husserl is right that there is a conflict between Dilthey's commitment to the possibility of objectively valid understanding and his emphasis on the historical situatedness of understanding. If we continue to demand that understanding remain valid outside of our own circumstances, we will be vulnerable to the criticism of the skeptic. Yet Husserl's criticism of Dilthey goes one step further than this: he implies that skepticism could only be rejected with a complete bracketing of the historicity of understanding. Husserl asserts that what is required over and beyond the historicizing of consciousness is a phenomenological seizing of the essence of historicity itself, and thus a philosophical science which abstracts from its own historicity in order to approach it as an object of analysis.

Husserl's footnote points to a central divergence between Dilthey and Husserl: a divergence concerning the interpretation of historicity. While Dilthey's conception of understanding allows him to suggest that any interpretation we might have of our historical situatedness is *itself* something historically situated—and therefore something that remains to be re-interpreted by way of reference to the lived realities of others—Husserl's conception of understanding requires that we bracket our historical situatedness and analyze it as if we were looking from "above." For Husserl, any "understanding" of our historical situation that is itself attributable to the particulars of our historical situation is not an understanding at all—it is not a seizing of the essence of historicity itself. This divergence can be seen even more clearly in Dilthey and Husserl's correspondence after the publication of "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science." After reading the article, Dilthey wrote to Husserl and rejected Husserl's characterization of his work as historicist (Biemel 1968, 434-36). Dilthey asserts that Husserl fails to show that a "systematic investigation based on history" is tantamount to either historicism or skepticism: he passes over the possibility that understanding might be reconceived in such a way that embraces the situatedness of lived experience. In his reply to Dilthey, Husserl denies that any of his arguments were directed against Dilthey (438). He explains that he did not mean to include Dilthey in his attack on skepticism, and that he intends to publish a clarificatory note in order to prevent further misinterpretations. [12]

Husserl's response to Dilthey makes no mention of the footnote in which he suggests that Dilthey failed to overcome skepticism. It is a surprising omission, and it makes us wonder: given that Dilthey conceived of understanding as inseparably linked to the activity of historicizing, how could Husserl have recognized Dilthey's philosophical project as anything but skepticism? In this 1911 correspondence Dilthey and Husserl simply cannot help but speak past one another—and the reason for this lies in the essential difference between their approaches to the interpretation of historicity: (1) Dilthey a *hermeneutic* treatment of historicity, and (2) Husserl a *transcendental* treatment of historicity. By making this distinction, my intention is not to imply that Dilthey's thought is lacking in any kind of transcendentalism, or that Husserlian phenomenology is transcendentalism at its core.[13] Instead, this distinction concerns solely the divergence between Dilthey and Husserl's approaches to the question, *how can we understand our historical situatedness in such a way that does not lead to skepticism?* For Dilthey, the answer lies in a radical concept of historicizing. We use what is given to us in experience to interpret our historical circumstances, we use this interpretation to clarify the meaning of our lived experience, and then we turn again to what is given to us in experience to re-interpret our historical circumstances. This is a distinctively *hermeneutic* treatment: the interpretation of our historical situatedness is potentially endless insofar as our sense for history is recognized as historically situated itself. For Husserl, on the other hand, the answer lies in the task of understanding our

[12] At one point, Husserl even writes: "it really seems to me that there are no serious differences between us. I believe that a long conversation would lead to full understanding" (438, my translation).

[13] As I will discuss, Dilthey's project is often read as containing transcendental elements. See: Ermarth (1978, 355-57) and De Mul (2014, 158-59).

historical situatedness in such a way that is not historically situated. This is a distinctively *transcendental* treatment: we pursue the possibility of an understanding that lies beyond the limits of historicizing—an understanding of historical situatedness *itself*. In characterizing Husserl's approach as transcendental, note that even the insistence that our understanding of historicity is achieved in historically specific circumstances is not enough to negate its transcendental character.[14] It remains the case that we are determined not to "get bogged down in the historical": our understanding of historicity will not be an understanding at all if it exhibits any kind of historically-situated standpoint. Where but to a transcendental standpoint could we be headed?

Some scholars have suggested that Husserl better distinguishes his treatment of historicity from transcendentalism after Dilthey's death in the fall of 1911.[15] After all, Husserl was always aware that consciousness is *factually* situated in historical circumstances. As Husserl writes to Georg Misch in 1930:

> [I want to] make plain that the 'ahistorical Husserl' *had to have* at times distanced himself from history (which he nevertheless had constantly had in view) precisely in order to come so far in method as to pose scientific questions in regard to it. (Husserl, quoted in Scharff 2018, 38)

Following Heidegger's (2008) *Being and Time*, Husserl insists to Misch that his phenomenological method never sought to abandon history altogether—the goal was instead to examine history as an object for phenomenological analysis. Yet as Robert C. Scharff (2018) has rightly observed, Husserl continues to approach the historicity of consciousness in this statement as an object of analysis (something "in view") rather than the context *within* which we analyze (38). We still see the same difference: while Dilthey approaches our historicity as a context that can never be brought entirely into view, Husserl indicates that our historicity can be understood in such a way that our understanding of it does not lead back to our historical situatedness.

This is seen equally in Husserl's *Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1970). From the beginning of the *Crisis* Husserl is concerned with the historicity of phenomenological analysis, and this concern leads him to the concept of the *life-world (Lebenswelt)*. Husserl (1970) observes that all philosophical thinking and scientific inquiry emerges in the context of the "life-world": the pre-given background of senses and meanings that is there for us in everyday experience (70-73, 124-25). The life-world is the "horizon" within which we live, acquire values, and interact with others. While previous philosophers

[14] For instance, Husserl recognizes "the tremendous value of history in the broadest sense for the philosopher." Yet he moves from this recognition to immediately assert that phenomenology must take a philosophical perspective on the historical field (Husserl 2002, 283).

[15] For instance, see Johnson 1980, 78.

have sought to achieve objective a priori knowledge, Husserl insists that any such knowledge is necessarily posited on the basis of "the life-world a priori" and the pre-given horizon of meaning within which we pursue knowledge (103-11). Accordingly, metaphysical accounts are always founded on a suppression of the life-world—and phenomenology, insofar as it concerns itself with the historicity of experience, is tasked with a complete change in orientation: a change in which the life-world itself is made the object of a "*universal epoché*" (148-51).

Husserl's concept of the life-world shares important similarities with Dilthey's concept of the life-nexus.[16] Both concepts serve as reminders that the sciences are rooted in pre-reflective experience. Both concepts are offered as a critique of metaphysics. Most relevant for our purposes, both concepts assert the essential historicity of consciousness and understanding. Yet in spite of these similarities, Husserl's attempt in the *Crisis* to bracket and analyze the life-world falls back into his earlier treatment of historicity. While the life-world is the horizon within which we carry out the phenomenological reduction, it is also something we are able to bracket as an object of analysis. Husserl (1970) writes:

> But can we be content with this? Can we be satisfied simply with the notion that human beings are *subjects for the world* and at the same time are objects in this world? . . . The *epoché*, in giving us the attitude *above* the subject-object correlation which belongs to the world and thus the attitude of focus upon the *transcendental subject-object correlation*, leads us to recognize, in self-recognition, that the world that exists for us, that is, our world in its being and being-such, takes its ontic meaning entirely from our intentional life through a priori types of accomplishments that can be exhibited rather than argumentatively constructed or conceived through mythical thinking. (180-81)

Contrary to the suggestion that Husserl's *Crisis* marks a significant departure from his early work, we can see that Husserl approaches historicity in much the same way.[17] While the life-world is the historically-situated context in which we attempt a change in orientation, the change in orientation which characterizes the phenomenological epoché allows us to bracket the life-world itself as an object and analyze it as though we are "above" it. The possibility of understanding historicity itself is retained, even with the recognition that the life-world is the context within which we understand.

Husserl's treatment of historicity is seen even more clearly in his appendix to the *Crisis*, the "Origin of Geometry." Husserl (1989) insists that any historical fact necessarily presupposes "the universal a priori of history" insofar as the facts of history are rooted in the structure of what is generally human: the "unity of traditionalization" that underlies all past life-worlds (174). Husserl is careful to note that this unity is undetermined, and that the structure of historicity is open in its forward movement (173). Yet Husserl's reduction of historicity to the essential structure of "universal historicity" nevertheless frames

[16] See Makkreel (1982, 40, 44).

[17] See Carr (1974); Noé (1992); Johnson (1980).

phenomenological analysis in opposition to a historicizing interpretation. For Husserl, the phenomenological epoché achieves something over and beyond historicizing.

## WHY THE DILTHEY-HUSSERL DEBATE MATTERS FOR CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY

The relevance of the Dilthey-Husserl debate for critical phenomenology can be seen by focusing on a single tendency in critical phenomenological research: the tendency to *historicize* lived experience. As Weiss, Murphy, and Salamon (2020) have suggested, critical phenomenology refers to a line of critical analysis which "mobilizes phenomenological description in the service of a reflexive inquiry into how power relations structure experience as well as our ability to analyze that experience" (xiv). The "reflexive inquiry" that is particular to critical phenomenology involves an attention to "the multiple ways in which power moves through our bodies and our lives": how power relations structure the ways we see (i.e., perceptual patterns), the ways we feel (i.e., our affective state), etc. Now as Salamon emphasizes, this reflexive inquiry is in large part consistent with classical phenomenology: we find in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty a similar emphasis on the fact that experience is always situated within multiple horizons of significance (including social and historical horizons). Yet critical phenomenology extends the concerns of classical phenomenology by reflecting on the socio-historical structural conditions of its *own* emergence (Salamon 2018, 12). Lisa Guenther (2020) distinguishes critical phenomenology's focus from that of classical phenomenology as follows:

> [Classical phenomenology] lights up the transcendental structures that we rely upon to make sense of things but which we routinely fail to acknowledge. In other words, phenomenology points us in a critical direction. But where classical phenomenology remains insufficiently critical is in failing to give a rigorous account of how contingent historical and social structures also shape our experience, not merely empirically . . . but in a quasi-transcendental way . . . Structures like "patriarchy," "white supremacy," and "heteronormativity" permeate, organize, and reproduce the natural attitude in ways that go beyond any particular object of thought. These are not things to be seen but rather "*ways of seeing*" . . . We overlook them at our peril, even if our project is transcendental, because they are part of what we must bracket to get into the phenomenological attitude. (11-12)

Guenther suggests that critical phenomenology distinguishes itself from classical phenomenology through its concern with the contingent socio-historical structures that shape our experience. Much like transcendental structures, "whiteness" and "heteronormativity" are not given to us in lived experience—they are conditions of experience, or "*ways of seeing*." Yet while classical phenomenology might acknowledge "whiteness" and "heteronormativity" as life-world concerns, its focus on the transcendental

structures of experience leads to the complete bracketing of these structures. Classical phenomenology fails to reckon with the reality that these "quasi-transcendental" structures continue to structure the phenomenological attitude itself—thus suggesting the need for an analysis which moves further in a *critical* direction. Critical phenomenology attempts this analysis by asserting that phenomenological description is itself conditioned by power relations, and that the phenomenologist needs to turn back and interrogate the conditions of the phenomenological attitude itself. The critical phenomenologist works to extend phenomenological description to objects of social and political critique—e.g., violence, racial injustice, gender inequality, etc.—and thereby redirects the self-reflective character of phenomenology against itself.

We can see immediately the relevance of the Dilthey-Husserl debate for critical phenomenology. After all, Dilthey and Husserl's disagreement concerned the interpretation of historicity. Given that critical phenomenology asserts the need to turn back on the phenomenological attitude and interrogate its socio-historical conditions, critical phenomenology demonstrates a similar occupation with the reality of our historical situatedness. Along this line, Weiss and Andrew Cutrofello (2019) have emphasized the significance of critical phenomenology's use of *histories* by suggesting that critical phenomenology is committed "to looking backward and taking responsibility for the injustices that have been committed in the past" (348). In particular, Weiss and Cutrofello observe that critical phenomenology is concerned with *silent* histories: histories that have contributed to the constitution of our experience without ever becoming visible to us. The critical phenomenologist attempts to recover these silent histories in order to open us to a more critical perspective on the way we experience things, and in this way they chart a path toward criticism through the *historicization* of lived experience.

But what exactly is the critical phenomenologist doing when they historicize the ways we experience things? As we have seen, Dilthey and Husserl acknowledged that lived experience is always historically situated. Yet they diverged on the question of how we can understand our historical situatedness without falling back into skepticism. Dilthey and Husserl's different approaches led them to conceive of historicity in significantly different ways, and depending on the way in which critical phenomenology approaches the treatment of our historicity, its commitment to historicizing could be two very different things. So what *is* historicizing?—or what *should* historicizing be?

Given that Husserl attempts to bracket and analyze the structure of historicity itself, his treatment of historicity is in clear tension with the aims of critical phenomenology. Consider what Husserl's approach implies for the activity of historicizing. Insofar as historicity is conceived in this way, the activity of historicizing takes on a specific meaning: to historicize the way we experience things is to interpret our experience against the background of a life-world whose own meaning is tied to the overarching unity of history. Even with the specification that this unity is "open" or "undetermined" in its meaning, historicizing is made into the activity of relating what is given to structures which are more fundamental: the unity that is implied by the historicity our society, of our historical period, etc. As Rudolf A. Makkreel (1982) has suggested, Husserl's analysis of the historical world amounts to a kind of *Abbau* (deconstruction): a movement from "higher levels" of the life-

world (i.e., what is given in lived experience) to increasingly "lower levels" which ground the higher levels (i.e., what is essential in universal historicity itself) (55). Such a deconstructive approach is rooted in the belief that we can bracket our historical situatedness: we are able to deconstruct the structure of historicity precisely because we are able to speak and think about historicity without evidencing it.

But *who* decides what the structure of historicity consists in? Must not the determination of more "fundamental" levels of the life-world *itself* be historically situated and thus an object to historicize? In response to this question, David Carr (1974) has pointed out that "the whole idea of a historical reduction makes no sense except on the assumption of (an) ahistorical truth" (248).[18] As soon as we posit the structure of historicity as an "ahistorical truth," however, we are still confronted with the same question: how is this truth conditioned by what is historical? Must we leave this question unanswered?—and if so, *why*? This was precisely Dilthey's (2010) concern when, after reading "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science," he observed that Husserl is able to interpret life only by abstracting from the "whole of life" (257). If the activity of historicizing experience is made dependent on a commitment to historicity as an ahistorical truth, then our ability to historicize experience would be made dependent on our willingness to uncritically *stop* as soon as we arrive at more "fundamental" levels of the life-world. Historicizing would have to give way to a kind of *ahistoricizing*.

Critical phenomenology's commitment to analyzing the socio-historical conditions of phenomenological description itself sets it in clear opposition to this Husserlian concept of historicizing. To historicize in this way would be to accept that the silent histories behind our ideas of "what historicity is" ought to *remain* silent, and to ignore Guenther's warning that "[w]e overlook them at our peril." Consider Sara Ahmed's (2006) discussion of the phenomenological epoché in *Queer Phenomenology*. After observing that the phenomenologist brackets the life-world and attends to the essence of what is experienced, she emphasizes that the domestic world which is bracketed in this process continues to condition the phenomenological attitude:

> What does it mean to assume that bracketing can "transcend" the familiar world of experience? Perhaps to bracket does not mean to transcend, even if we put something aside. We remain reliant on what we put in brackets . . . What is 'put aside,' we might say, is the very space of the familiar, which is also what clears the philosopher's table and allows him to do his work. (33-34).

In the phenomenological attitude, the phenomenologist continues to make use of language, the body, material things such as paper, a desk, etc.—all things which have a history. As Ahmed says, "[w]e remain reliant on what we put in brackets": we remain historically situated even when we bracket our own historicity. What is especially important in Ahmed's discussion here is the implication that we need to historicize beyond what phenomenology allows, i.e., to historicize even the phenomenological attitude. Ahmed asserts the need to investigate histories which condition the phenomenological attitude, and this includes

[18] Johnson (1980) makes the same claim as Carr in his own discussion of Husserl (87-88).

histories which have shaped our experience of "gendered bodies." Once we recognize that the phenomenological *epoché* presupposes a masculine subject who is able to "disappear" from his situatedness and inhabit the phenomenological attitude, we are led to the possibility of a queer phenomenology: an analysis which would "turn the tables" on phenomenology and examine its own gendered conditions (63).

By suggesting the need to historicize whatever is said of historicity, critical phenomenology turns back on Dilthey and Husserl's disagreement and moves in the direction of Dilthey's interpretation of historicity. As we have seen, Dilthey believed that it is only through the activity of historicizing that we come to understand our historical situatedness. For Dilthey, there is no point at which understanding is permitted to separate itself from historicizing—to understand our historical situatedness we have to historicize understanding itself, and recognize that even our ideas about our historical situatedness are historical. Correspondingly, the activity of historicizing is something entirely different for Dilthey. While for Husserl our historical situatedness can be brought into view and interpretatively deconstructed (*Abbau*), for Dilthey our historical situatedness can never be brought entirely into view—our interpretation of it is necessarily a constructive activity (*Aufbau*) (Makkreel 1982, 55). Whatever our interpretation of history might be, this interpretation must always be re-opened through the activity of historicizing: we have to recognize that our sense for history is contingent, and then attempt to construct the history behind our sense of history by way of appeal to what is given in experience—e.g., the expressions of others, cultural systems, works of art, political movements, etc. This is why the activity of historicizing becomes for Dilthey a source of radical possibility. To historicize experience is to recognize the contingency of the way we experience things, and to open ourselves to the possibility of experiencing otherwise.

Here is where I think Dilthey—and reflection on the Dilthey-Husserl debate—has relevance for critical phenomenological research. Insofar as Dilthey approaches our historical situatedness as an object of historical interpretation, his analysis leads us to conceive of the activity of historicizing not as *giving* meaning to our experiential life, but as continually *re-opening the question* of the meaning of our experiential life in a way that allows for critical interrogation. Stated more simply, Dilthey's recognition that our historicity needs to be historicized itself moves toward the insight that subjects can be situated in history in vastly *different* ways, and historical interpretation is precisely what enables us to criticize conceptions of history which suppress this difference. While critical phenomenologists have made extensive use of historicizing, their commitment to examining the ways that power conditions the phenomenological attitude has largely led them to steer clear of the notion of "historicity." If we follow Dilthey's thinking about historicizing, however, it becomes possible to speak of the plural *historicities*, i.e., historically specific ways of relating to and becoming situated within history.

In *Solitary Confinement*, Guenther (2013) approaches this alternative way of thinking about historicity when she describes the reality of "social death." She explains that the socially dead (e.g., prisoners in solitary confinement) are persons who are "excluded, dominated, or humiliated to the point of becoming dead to the rest of society" (xx). Such people are removed from the network of intersubjective relations which alone makes possible

personhood, but equally also from the relations which make possible a *historical* horizon. Guenther observes that socially dead persons become separated from both past and future generations, and therefore abandoned to an existence that is separated from a historical community. She asks: "Without a living relation to past and future generations, who am I? Do I still have a stake in historical time?" (xxiii).

As soon as Guenther's analysis brings her to the point of recognizing that intersubjectivity is fundamental to the possibility of historicity, she asks herself: is it possible to fall out of our situatedness within history? Is the character of historical existence itself dependent on our being positioned within a network of intersubjective relations?—and thus a privilege for some and not others? What is significant about this moment in *Solitary Confinement* is that Guenther draws on the histories of prisoners in solitary confinement in order to arrive at the suggestion that our historicity is something contingent. To be "historically situated" is to experience in a socially and historically privileged way, and if we attempt to interpret the history behind one's "historical situatedness," we will be brought before the possibility of experiencing otherwise.

If critical phenomenologists are to consider the silent histories behind our historical situatedness—and thus to speak of the plural historicities—they will need to take a hermeneutic approach to historicity. It is here that Dilthey's opposition to Husserl is informative for critical phenomenology. As we find in Dilthey's reevaluation of understanding, the condition of being historical does not need to be approached transcendentally—it can also be approached by way of historical interpretation. This is what is entailed by a radical concept of historicizing. Now in arguing for the advantages of a hermeneutic approach to historicity, my intention is not at all to represent Dilthey as a model for critical phenomenology. As I have mentioned, Dilthey's treatment of historicity has been as much a problem for hermeneutic thinking as it has been a solution. Heidegger and Gadamer, for instance, directed strong criticisms at Dilthey for his continued commitment to the possibility of objectively valid understanding.[19] Despite asserting the historical situatedness of understanding, Dilthey's fear of lapsing into skepticism led him to assert that an understanding of what is given in experience can only be considered genuine if it remains valid outside of its own situatedness. Dilthey maintains that our historical situatedness is simultaneously that which makes possible understanding and that which limits understanding (Linge 1973, 544).

As a way of conclusion, however, I believe the insight in Dilthey's response to Husserl in 1911—that it is possible to reconceive of understanding as an essentially historical activity—can be read as the *promise* of a genuinely hermeneutic treatment of historicity. Such a reading would allow us to say that critical phenomenology belongs within the tradition that has worked to fulfill this promise. Heidegger (2009), for one, observed that Dilthey was the first to achieve "a truly radical awareness" of the problem of historicity, but that what remained to be further developed in his work was the *ontological* character of historicity (72).

[19] See, for instance, Heidegger (2008, 454-55, 2011); Gadamer (2013, 222-44).

In *Being and Time,* Heidegger tells us that his project of a fundamental ontology of Dasein is an extension of Dilthey's hermeneutical project, but one which grasps that Dasein is historical in its *being*, and that even its historicity needs to be understood in terms of its factical Being-in-the-world (Heidegger 2008, 454-55).[20] Gadamer's philosophical project has similarly emerged out of an engagement with Dilthey. Like Heidegger, Gadamer (2013) asserts that Dilthey's concept of historicity needs to extended beyond his commitment to the possibility of objectively valid understanding what is required is the acknowledgement that "[t]o be historically means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete" (313).[21] Any understanding we might have of our historical situatedness is necessarily rooted in "prejudices," i.e., the "biases of our openness to the world," and thus remains to be taken as an object of historical understanding itself (Gadamer 2008, 9).[22]

Critical phenomenologists' efforts to re-problematize the relationship between phenomenology and history should be seen as an extension of this same line of hermeneutic thinking. Insofar as critical phenomenology is committed to analyzing what is historically-specific in phenomenology's focus on transcendental structures, historicity itself needs to be made an object for historical interpretation—and one finds precisely this effort in the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics since Dilthey. Perhaps this is what we discover in revisiting the Dilthey-Husserl debate, then: an opportunity for critical phenomenology to reconsider its historical roots.

## REFERENCES

Ahmed, Sara. 2006. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Bambach, Charles. 2019. "Hermeneutics and Historicity: Dilthey's Critique of Historical Reason." In *Interpreting Dilthey: Critical Essays*, edited by Eric S. Nelson, 82-102. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Biemel, Walter. 1968. "Der Briefwechsel Dilthey-Husserl." *Man and World* 1 (3): 428–46.

Burke, Megan. 2020. "Heteronormativity." In *50 Concepts for a Critical* Phenomenology,* edited by Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, & Gayle Salamon, 161–68. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

[20] Of course, this is not to downplay the profound importance of Husserlian phenomenology for *Being and Time*. My intention is only to emphasize that Heidegger's hermeneutics of factical Dasein draws on Dilthey's treatment of historicity *rather than* Husserl's. For an extensive discussion of Heidegger's extension of Dilthey, the reader is encouraged to see Scharff (2018).

[21] See also Gadamer (2008, 11).

[22] For an extended discussion of Gadamer's extension of Dilthey, see Linge (1973, 546-53).

Carr, David. 1974. *Phenomenology and the Problem of History: A Study of Husserl's Transcendental Philosophy.* Chicago: Northwestern University Press.

De Mul, Jos. 2014. *The Tragedy of Finitude: Dilthey's Hermeneutics of Life*. Translated by Tony Burrett. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Dilthey, Wilhelm. 1960. *Gesammelte Schriften VIII. Band*, Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft.

———. 1977. *Descriptive Psychology and Historical Understanding*. Translated by Richard M. Zaner and Kenneth L. Heiges. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

———. 1989. *Selected Works I: Introduction to the Human Sciences*, edited by Rudolf A. Makkreel & Frithjof Rodi. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———. 1990. *Gesammelte Schriften IV. Band*, besorgt von Karlfried Gründer & Frithjof Rodi. Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft.

———. 2010. *Selected Works III: The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, edited by Rudolf A. Makkreel & Frithjof Rodi. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

———. 2018. *Selected Works IV: Hermeneutics and the Study of History*, edited by Rudolf A. Makkreel & Frithjof Rodi. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

———. 2019. *Selected Works VI: Ethical and World-View Philosophy*, edited by Rudolf A. Makkreel & Frithjof Rodi. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Dilthey, Wilhelm & Grafen Paul Yorck von Wartenburg. 2020. *Briefwechsel zwischen Wilhelm Dilthey und dem Grafen Paul Yorck v. Wartenburg, 1877-1897*, edited by Gräfin Sigrid von der Schulenburg. Middleton: BiblioLife Press.

Ermarth, Michael. 1978. *Wilhelm Dilthey: The Critique of Historical Reason.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Forster, Michael N. 2019. "Dilthey's Importance for Hermeneutics." In *Interpreting Dilthey: Critical Essays*, edited by Eric S. Nelson, 61–101. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 2008. "The Science of the Life-World." In *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, edited and translated by David E. Linge, 182–97. Berkeley: University of California Press.

———. 2008. "The Phenomenological Movement." In *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, edited and translated by David E. Linge, 130–81. Berkeley: University of California Press.

———. 2013. *Truth and Method*. Translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Guenther, Lisa. 2013. *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and its Afterlives.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

———. 2020. "Critical Phenomenology." In *50 Concepts for a Critical* Phenomenology*, edited by Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, & Gayle Salamon, 11–16. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Heidegger, Martin. 2008. *Being and Time.* Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics.

———. 2011. *The Concept of Time: The First Draft of "Being and Time."* Translated by Ingo Farin. New York: Continuum.

Hertog, Francois & Michael Werner. 2014. "History/Story." In *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, edited by Barbara Cassin, Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra, & Michael Wood, 439-40. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Husserl, Edmund. 1970. *Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, translated by David Carr. Chicago: Northwestern University Press.

———. 1977. *Phenomenological Psychology*, translated by John Scanlon. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

———. 1983. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*: *First Book*. Translated by F. Kersten. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

———. 1989. "Origin of Geometry." In *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*. Translated by David Carr, 155-80. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

———. 2001. *The Shorter Logical Investigations*, translated by J. N. Findlay. London: Routledge.

———. 2002. "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science." In *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* II, edited by Burt Hopkins and Steven Cromwell. Translated by Marcus Brainard: 249–95.

Jalbert, John E. 1988. "Husserl's Position Between Dilthey and the Windelband-Rickert School of Neo-Kantianism." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 26 (2): 279–96.

Johnson, Galen A. 1980. "Husserl and History." *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 11 (1): 77–91.

Linge, David E. 1973. "Dilthey and Gadamer: Two Theories of Historical Understanding." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 41 (4): 536–53.

Makkreel, Rudolf. A. 1982. "Husserl, Dilthey, and the Relation of the Life-World to History." *Research in Phenomenology* 12: 39–58.

Moran, Dermot. 2018. "Husserl's Hermeneutics: From Intuition of Lived Experiences to the Horizonal Lifeworld." In *Hermeneutics and Phenomenology: Figures and Themes,* edited by Saulius Geniusas & Paul Fairfield, 122–43. London: Bloomsbury.

Noé, Keiichi. 1992. "The Hermeneutic Turn in Husserl's Phenomenology of Language." *Human Studies* 15 (1): 117–28.

Owensby, David. 1988. "Dilthey and Husserl on the Role of the Subject in History." *Philosophy Today* 32 (3): 221–31.

Rand, Calvin G. 1964. "Two Meanings of Historicism in the Writings of Dilthey, Troeltsch, and Meinecke." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 25 (4): 503–18.

Salamon, Gayle. 2018. "What's Critical about Critical Phenomenology?" *Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology* 1: 8–17.

Scharff, Robert C. 2018. *Heidegger Becoming Phenomenological: Interpreting Husserl through Dilthey, 1916–1925.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Smith, David Woodruff. 2013. *Husserl*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Weiss, Gail and Andrew Cutrofello. 2019. "Introduction." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 33 (3): 341–48.

Weiss, Gail, Ann V. Murphy, & Gayle Salamon, ed. 2020. *50 Concepts for a Critical* Phenomenology*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Yancy, George. 2020. "Confiscated Bodies." In *50 Concepts for a Critical* Phenomenology,* edited by Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, & Gayle Salamon, 69–75. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

PUNCTA
*Journal of Critical Phenomenology*

# CLIMATE COLLAPSE, JUDGMENT DAY, AND THE TEMPORAL SUBLIME

TED TOADVINE
*The Pennsylvania State University*

It is commonplace today to hear climate change identified as the single most important challenge facing humanity. Consider the headlines from COP24, the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Poland in December 2018. U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres opened the proceedings by calling climate change "the most important issue we face" (PBS 2018). The Secretary-General's remarks paraphrase the opening line of the U.N.'s climate change web page, which announces that "[c]limate Change is the defining issue of our time and we are at a defining moment" (United Nations n.d.). Such statements about the singular significance of climate change—*the* most important, the *defining* issue—are often followed by proclamations about what hangs in the balance, and this was the case at COP24. There, the celebrated British naturalist Sir David Attenborough warned that "collapse of our civilizations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizons," amounting to, in his words, "disaster of global scale, our greatest threat in thousands of years" (Jordans and Scislowska 2018).

As common as this rhetoric is, and despite the important strategic role that it plays in the context of international climate negotiations, it leaves me profoundly uneasy. I say "uneasy," rather than "skeptical," because I am neither a skeptic about anthropogenic climate disruption nor about the scientific evidence and predictions of terrible times to come. What leaves me uneasy is something else, a matter of how *the present* is interpreted when climate collapse is identified as *the* most important issue *we* face, threatening the collapse of civilization as such. This suggests, first, that civilization has been going along just fine and would continue to do so if not interrupted by something more or less external to it, something not essential to it or to its continuation. We are called to marshal all available resources as quickly as possible to address the single greatest challenge the world has ever faced, in the hopes that we can preserve it in its present form, sustain it, into the future as far as possible. I am uneasy with this assessment of our present state of affairs and this emergency prioritization of its continuation as *the* decisive issue of our time.

Second, I am uneasy about the "we" who here claim to speak for humanity, for "our civilizations." How much of humanity does this "we" include? Would the ten percent of the world's population living in extreme poverty today, or the nearly half of the world's population that struggles to meet basic needs, agree that climate collapse is the most important issue "we" face? (World Bank 2018). Would those whose lives, livelihoods, and communities have been violated by extractive industries, by settler colonialism, by forced migration, by environmental injustices, by police violence, by anti-Black racism, by the intersections of violence and oppression that have made and continue to make "our" civilization possible—would they agree that climate change is "the defining issue of our time" or that every available resource should be mobilized to maintain the world in its present form? This is far from obvious to me.

To be clear, I do not believe that *anyone* will be *better off* as a consequence of climate disruption. It is well-established that the most vulnerable—the poor, women, children, the elderly, communities of color, the displaced, the incarcerated—will suffer the most. And even the wealthiest and most privileged will be unable to avoid its effects entirely.[1] In this sense, it could be considered a common danger, a danger shared by everyone. Some see in this a reason for political optimism. Traditionally, communities of color have been "our" environmental sacrifice zones, the dumping grounds for extractive and polluting industries, incinerators, toxic waste, and so on, so that the costs of "civilization" could remain out of sight and out of mind for those who accrue its benefits. But climate change is happening to everyone, and the violence of the extractive industries that feed it is already impacting educated, wealthy, white communities, so that new coalitions have become possible.[2] Those with political and economic clout, or at least some of them, are now motivated to address the root causes of climate change since they can no longer avoid its effects. But this is precisely why the "we" rings hollow when it declares climate change the decisive issue for everyone, rather than for those who are most invested in the continuation of the world as it is.

I have started here intentionally with my feelings of uneasiness, rather than with any argument per se, because I do not dismiss the genuine hardships to come. As of December 2020, the last seven years have been the hottest years since we began keeping records. Real human lives have been lost as a result, and this is still the beginning. And so it is difficult to bring the rhetoric of urgency surrounding climate destabilization into critical focus. Nevertheless, it is precisely this rhetoric of urgency that is my topic here.

We begin, then, by asking whether this prioritization of climate destabilization as *the* defining threat of recorded human history is justified. In his book, *Stolen Future, Broken Present*, David Collings (2014) suggests that climate disruption deserves this status because it fundamentally alters our relationship to the future as such. As he describes in a chapter titled, "The Ruins to Come," climate predictions portray our *present* culture and lives,

[1] See Collings (2014), especially chapter 1.

[2] This is roughly Naomi Klein's (2014) argument in *This Changes Everything*.

the world of today, as *future* ruins. Looking around us right now, we should see this world shadowed by the ruin it is on the verge of becoming. Still, this is not enough to make climate collapse the definitive danger of human history: civilizations have ended before, and we have all admired the picturesque ruins that they have left behind. And certainly, at various points, those whose civilizations were in decline had premonitions of what was coming and could also picture their own worlds as future ruins. But there is more. The future ruins of climate change are not confined to a few buildings, or a city, or a landscape. This time, the future ruins encompass the earth as a whole (105). Before, we might have said that, while civilizations rise and fall, nature endures. This is no longer true. Before, those whose cultures were collapsing might still have had hope in a different future for themselves or their children, the possibility to rebuild elsewhere. But this time, survivors will witness the definitive eclipse of humanity's future, with no guarantees of any new beginning (107). As Collings (2014) concludes:

> Our own mortality fades in comparison to something altogether more harrowing—the possible mortality of our societies, the natural systems we know, and to some extent the biosphere itself. In our world, the temporal coherence of a future into which our individual lives vanish—the coherence, in short, of mortality itself—is falling into decay. (112)

At stake in climate disruption, then, is not merely the ruin of *a* world, that of the civilizations of today, but of the very basis for *the* world and even for time itself as we know it.

Collings is not alone to see the ruins of the future in the figure of climate disruption. For Andrew Benjamin (2017), in an essay titled "The World in Ruins," it is the task of philosophy to think the end of the world starting from a double sense of catastrophe. A catastrophe in the first and transformative sense would decouple the existing link between climate change and injustice, thereby bringing about the creation of a new world (102-03). But such a transformative catastrophe may no longer be a possibility for us today. In that case, we are left only with the second sense of catastrophe, catastrophic climate change, without transformation or continuity. As Benjamin writes, "[t]he end to be thought is the end of the world *as such*, that is, a world that is *now* present without always already bearing within it the inscription, image, or possibility of another beginning" (103). It is this "ending without a beginning . . . an ending that is not itself a preparation for a beginning," whose insistence demands thought (104, 109).

Framing Benjamin's inquiry is the conviction that philosophy can no longer remain apathetic to its own predicament, that it is no longer possible to refuse, on philosophical grounds, the relation between philosophy and the *now* in which it takes a stand (101-02). By "the *now*," italicized to distinguish it from our simple sense of now, he intends "a thinking of the present as that which generates the philosophical task" (118 n. 1). The insistent *now* of such a philosophical task would be entirely distinct from either the self-evident now of empiricism or the inevitable now of naturalism. With this redefinition of philosophy's task, Benjamin takes us a long way toward articulating an essential aim of critical phenomenology, which, in taking a stand, would "allow the question of its own stand in relation to the *now*

to delimit a specific philosophical project." Benjamin's (2017) own contention here is that "what determines or defines the *now* is the ineliminable presence of catastrophic climate change, a change that is leaving the world in ruins" (102). In short, where philosophy stands *now* can only be thought in relation to this predicament, so that, as he succinctly puts it, "what has to be thought is the end of the world" (101).

Here I take up this task of thinking the *now* in its relation to the future, or to the end of the future. But I do so by asking after the image of time that this orientation toward the end implies or unfolds. More precisely, my starting point will be popular narratives of climate change, and environmentalism more generally, with respect to their apocalyptic structure. Apocalyptic fantasies weave through contemporary culture and intertwine themselves with our scientific predictions and our efforts to manage the future. I propose that these apocalyptic fantasies enact a temporal narrative that first became possible with our discovery of "deep" geological timescales, scales of time so vast that they explode all efforts to integrate them with the time of human life. The emergence of secular apocalyptic narratives goes hand-in-hand with this expansion of the horizons of time, so that time encompasses pasts that precede us as well as futures that survive us. In short, a radical end of the world first becomes thinkable through a new image of time, a new temporal sublime, that underlies apocalypticism in its recent forms, including speculative fictions, nuclear fears, environmental disaster, and climate disruption.

On this basis, I explore a series of questions posed by such apocalyptic narratives: Does this image of time exhaust our possibilities for relating to the sublime dimensions of the deep past and far future? Does it skew our relation to the present, to the *now*? What investments or fears are expressed through this apocalyptic image, and what does it reveal about our responsiveness to and responsibility for the past, present, and future? Does justice demand of us a different image of time, and what form might this take?

I proceed first by briefly summarizing the transformation of temporal horizons opened by geological scales of time and past extinctions as a reconfiguration of the temporal sublime. I turn then to the role of apocalyptic narratives in climate change rhetoric and the image of time that frames these narratives. Here, I am especially interested in the role that crisis plays as the passage from the corrupt present to a purified future, marked by the transfiguration of time in the crucible of Judgment Day. On this basis, I consider some of the investments and motivations underlying the tragic and comic modes of time that drive climate narratives. I argue that these instantiate what Jean-Luc Nancy has called "catastrophic equivalence," leveling time into homogenous and substitutable units to facilitate the predictability and manageability of the future. Rather than owning our temporal responsibilities, then, apocalyptic narratives in fact seek to liquidate our obligations to the past, obscure the singularity of the present, and exert absolute control over the future. A just image of time faces two demands: responsiveness to the singularity of the present, and to the entanglement of this present in the plexities of past and future. I conclude with two explorations of this figure of temporal justice: Kyle Powys Whyte's (2018) proposal of "spiraling time" as a living dialogue with our ancestors and descendants, and artist Roni Horn's installation, *Library of Water*, in Stykkishólmur, Iceland.

## THE TEMPORAL SUBLIME

I begin with some historical context for our shifting horizons of time, which I read through the lens of the temporal sublime. The fact that long expanses of time confront the human mind with a sublime dimension was recognized by both David Hume and Immanuel Kant, although neither devotes much attention to this experience.[3] Kant's entire treatment of this topic in his pre-critical *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* [1764], for instance, appears in the following few lines:

> A long duration is sublime. If it is of time past, it is noble; if it is projected forth into an unforeseeable future, then there is something terrifying in it. An edifice from the most distant antiquity is worthy of honor. Haller's description of the future eternity inspires a mild horror, and of the past, a transfixed admiration. (2007, 26)

In the later terms of the *Critique of Judgment* [1790], this suggests that the past confronts us with an experience of the mathematical sublime, and indeed Kant refers there to past time as an infinite magnitude (1987, 111), although this later text offers no further mention of time's sublime character. The unforeseeable future, on the other hand, although never mentioned in the *Critique of Judgment*, would be a species of the dynamically sublime, arousing fear in us in a way that is somehow parallel to the elemental examples that Kant favors: threatening rocks, thunderclouds, volcanoes, hurricanes, and the like (120).[4] The reference here to Albrecht von Haller's (2002) "Uncompleted Poem on Eternity" suggests that, for Kant, the future is not to be thought as an infinite magnitude since it is progressing towards its end. And, indeed, he returns to Haller in his 1794 text, "The End of All Things"—a rebuke of Prussian millenarian politics—where what is at stake is not a future proceeding to infinity but precisely eternity as the horrifying abyss that opens beyond the edge of time, beyond the Judgment Day that brings the sensible world to its conclusion. Eternity beyond time is unthinkable, and its "frighteningly *sublime*" character is due in part to its obscurity; yet, according to Kant, "in the end it must also be woven in a wondrous way into universal human reason, because it is encountered among all reasoning peoples at all times, clothed in one way or another" (1996, 221; emphasis in original). The caution of Kant's tale is to remember that the religious and cultural imagery with which we clothe this notion of eternity must be understood according to the moral order and not in literal or physical terms.

[3] Hume (2007, 274-80); Kant (2007); Brady (2013) traces some of the early history of the temporal sublime.

[4] Such elemental examples of the dynamically sublime are also among the omens for Judgment Day (Kant 1996, 225).

For both Hume and Kant, the sublime past is revealed only through cultural antiquities, never through natural or elemental phenomena.[5] But in the thirty years that separate these sparse references to the temporal sublime in Kant, developments in what would come to be known as geological science were setting the stage for a dramatic reorientation in our relationship with long durations of time. James Hutton's 1788 *Theory of the Earth* famously proposed a concept of geological time with "no vestige of a beginning—no prospect of an end" (304), and through the writings of his friend and popularizer, John Playfair, this newly opened horizon of what would come to be known as "deep" time was characterized from the outset in sublime terms.[6] This discovery of the deep past simultaneously opens the horizons of the far future and our contemporary cultural obsession with apocalypse. Georges Cuvier's evidence for prehistoric extinctions laid the groundwork for Mary Shelley's exploration of future human extinction in her 1826 novel, *The Last Man*, generally recognized as the first secular apocalyptic novel. The genre of apocalyptic speculative fiction inaugurated by Shelley first gained popularity by imagining our demise from natural causes, but the First World War shifted our fantasies toward the prospect of self-annihilation by weapons of mass destruction. And Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, written during the lead up to the Cuban Missile Crisis, played a key role in transferring our nuclear anxieties to the emerging threat of ecological collapse.

Contemporary climate apocalypticism is therefore simply the latest phase in our cultural efforts to manage the sublime dimensions of our uncertain future. Just as the threat of total nuclear war—what Jacques Derrida in 1984 termed the "phantasm of a remainderless destruction" (2007, 396)—framed human reality during the Cold War period, so the phantasm of future climate collapse constructs our present today. Ongoing debates over whether to name our contemporary geological period the "Anthropocene" are symptomatic of this transfigured temporal perspective, which offers a vantage from which humanity can hold itself responsible—for the first time—for our long-term ecological transformations of the globe, while raising—also for the first time—the question of our ethical obligations toward an unimaginably distant future. At stake, then, in environmentalism's adoption of apocalyptic narratives is an underlying image of time, one that becomes especially salient in climate change narratives. Let us consider, first, the reliance of climate discourse on apocalyptic narratives and then draw out the image of time by which these are framed.

[5] In *Critique of Judgment,* Kant (1987) points out that the shape of land and sea as encountered today is the result of chaotic upheavals and disturbances in ancient times, recorded in the "memorials of mighty devastations" studied by the "archeology of nature" (or "theory of the earth"). But Kant does not discuss these "memorials" as having a sublime character due to their antiquity, and they do not pre-date "man"; the lack of human fossil remains is explained, for Kant, by the fact that "his understanding was able to rescue him (for the most part, at least) from those devastations" (316).

[6] See, in particular, Playfair's (1822( description of his 1788 trip with Hutton to Siccar Point (80-81).

## CLIMATE COLLAPSE AS JUDGMENT DAY

During the final week of the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference, four Greenpeace activists paraded on horseback through the streets of Copenhagen dressed in costumes representing famine, pestilence, war, and death. Invoking the four horsemen of the apocalypse from the biblical Book of Revelations, their intent was to dramatize the stakes of climate change negotiations. In a press release from Greenpeace International, Sini Harkka of Greenpeace Nordic explained that "[t]he spectre of the four horseman is looming over these climate negotiations . . . Yet world leaders are still failing to grasp the urgency of the crisis" (Greenpeace International 2009). Despite the drama of this example, such uses of apocalyptic rhetoric to influence public opinion and political will concerning climate change no longer surprise anyone, and there has been considerable debate among scholars and activists about whether this rhetoric actually achieves its desired effect. These debates tend to start from an understanding of "apocalypse" as straightforwardly synonymous with catastrophe, with the end of the world "as we know it," whether that means the end of "our" current standard of living, or the end of human civilization in any historically recognizable form, or the literal extinction of the human species, and so on. And when apocalypse is read as synonymous with catastrophe, the rhetorical deployment of the narrative is understood to be in the service of galvanizing individual action and political will through fear and horror at the likely consequences of inaction. This rhetorical strategy can then be criticized as ineffectual or counter-productive fear-mongering along the lines familiar from Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger (2007).

Now, my interest here is not with the psychological or political efficacy of apocalyptic rhetoric, but with the temporality that it enacts. To that end, I want to call attention to the trend, noted by Stefan Skrimshire (2014), of stripping references to apocalypse of their "theological nuances" in favor of their "sensationalist elements," and particularly of treating such discourses as reducible to fear of the future. What is obscured here, Skrimshire reminds us, is precisely the "complex dramatic structure" of the religious apocalyptic narrative, which includes "the creation of tension between the corruption that is endured in the present age and the hope in the new age that is yet to come" (237). The temporal, eschatological element of apocalyptic thinking is precisely to be found in this productive tension, which revolves around an explicit or implicit "Judgment Day."

One of the defining features of apocalyptic temporality is said to be its linear directionality, either guided by divine providence or driven by natural forces, toward a catastrophic end-point, a "judgment day," beyond which all individual human judgment is irrelevant (Foust and Murphy 2009, 154). Alongside the spectacular destruction of the current world, this narrative structure "prophecies (directly or implicitly) a new world order," and Judgment Day marks the passage into this new age, which is therefore also a new time (154, citing Brummett 1984). To clarify the role of this moment of crisis as a temporal hinge, as the turning point between "our" time and a time to come, we draw on the work of political theorist Ben Jones (2017), who examines the appeal of Christian apocalyptic thinking for

secular political theorists. Jones focuses on the strand of Christian thinking that he terms "cataclysmic apocalyptic thought," exemplified by the Book of Revelation among other texts, that "identifies crisis as the path to the ideal society" (2). On this view, crisis is not to be avoided but rather welcomed since it is the only path that can wipe away the current state of corruption and replace it with lasting utopia (3). The truly apocalyptic crisis, then, is the final crisis, the one that installs us in a time beyond all crises. And this leavens our everyday struggles, here and now, with transcendent significance, insofar as they are moments of the larger progression toward final purification; we may be losing the local struggle, but we are still on the winning side of the cosmic battle.[7] My suggestion is that our cultural fascination with fictional apocalyptic narratives is less a manifestation of our desire for our own destruction than our yearning for this transcendent significance; we are ready, in our heart of hearts, to wipe the world away and start again, even at the risk that we might be wiped away with it. In the Christian version of this narrative, of course, the crisis and its aftermath unfold under the guidance of divine providence, and we need only have faith in this. Secular versions proceed without this safety net or try, like Marxism, to replace it by other mechanisms. In any case, the way that we live the apocalyptic narrative today is through our deep pleasure at the prospect of leaping into an unimaginable world and a new age without any guarantees of survival—and, importantly, without any unpaid debts to the past.

The radicality of this image of time follows from the unique moment of judgment, which is precisely a singular break where time folds, dehiscing into the old that is washed away and the ideal future to come. This returns us to Kant's (1996) late essay, "The End of All Things," where he calls attention to the strange temporality of Judgment Day as the hinge between time and eternity, which both horrifies and attracts us with the full force of the sublime. For Kant this is a transition between the happening of events under the conditions of time, on the one hand, and an eternity in which nothing can come to pass, on the other, a situation that cannot be rationally comprehended but is to be understood according to the moral order of ends. Judgment Day is always a selection, a differentiation of the corrupt from the pure, that represents an absolute break with the past—toward which no further debts are owed—and entrance into a finality beyond which no further beginning, no future as such, is possible. What contemporary apocalyptic thinking retains from this structure is the linear sorting of time into a corrupt present and an ideal beyond, with the moment of judgment as their transition. As with Kant, it is the eternal or the utopian moment that remains sublime, unthinkable—and transcendent.

[7] On this point, see Jones (2017, 5) and Skrimshire (2014, 239).

## APOCALYPTIC EQUIVALENCE AND TEMPORAL LIABILITY

The suggestion I have been developing here is that our contemporary apocalypticism remains fundamentally eschatological, that it embraces crisis as a Judgment Day that marks the hinge between our corrupt present world and a new dawn, even or especially when this eschatological frame is not consciously or explicitly theological. It is this basic narrative that has underwritten environmentalism since at least *Silent Spring*, despite the modifications that it has undergone in the light of new technologies and shifting political contexts.[8] This narrative justifies itself in terms of our ethical obligations toward the future, and yet it assumes a figure of time that conceals our ethical obligations—not only toward the future, but also toward the past and present.

To see why this is so, we must first recognize that the apocalyptic image of time participates in what Jean-Luc Nancy (2015) has termed the "equivalence of catastrophes." Nancy describes our global ecotechnical situation as an ever-expanding entanglement of interdependencies between innumerable systems—political, military, industrial, financial, logical, natural, and so on. This interdependence depends on the translatability of units across all of these systems, which requires that the units have a common denominator, a common measure of equivalence. This is most obvious in the equivalence of bits and bytes, such as when a picture taken on your phone is stamped with GIS location data, sent by wifi to the cloud, distributed across social media platforms, viewed around the world, backed up on Google's hard drives, added to law enforcement facial recognition databases, and so on. The interdependence of all systems means that our catastrophes, such as the 2011 disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant discussed by Nancy, are uncontainable in their effects. But the deeper catastrophe, as Nancy argues, is the general equivalence that makes the interdependence of systems possible in the first place, namely, the leveling of all measures into a common denominator that facilitates translation across domains. This general equivalence inspires a proliferation of means and ends without orientation toward any final end or ultimate goal other than their own continued expansion and proliferation. It is this loss of any ultimate sense or direction that Nancy has called the "end of the world" (1997, 4-5). Our constant awareness of the possibility of our own self-destruction stands in place of any final end as the secret fulfillment of the leveling of time into a homogenous continuum (2015, 17-20). The operations of this catastrophe of equivalence can be traced in those approaches to sustainability that extrapolate from deep-past trends to predict and manage far-future scenarios, thereby tacitly assuming that our obligation toward the future is to "sustain" the world in a state that resembles as closely as possible our present.

Nancy points out that the absence of any end or goal for our ecotechnical interdependencies apart from their own self-perpetuation traps us in a cycle of planning and management of the future in general, and the extrapolation of the past to calculate

[8] See Killingsworth and Palmer (1996); Buell (2010).

the future demonstrates the sway of this general equivalence in our understanding of time, since each chronological present moment is substitutable and exchangeable for every other. Now, this catastrophic leveling of time is precisely a means of repressing the sublime dimensions of the future through calculative management. In other words, by leveling time into homogenous and exchangeable units, we defang the future of its unpredictability; we contain it as an infinitely repeatable present. Thus managed, the threat of our extinction or of the end of the world can be indefinitely deferred. On this approach, the threat of the end of the world (and the end of time) justifies absolute management of the world through the homogenization of time. Judgment Day, as the only decisive interruption of the linear and calculable equivalence of "nows," always looms on the horizon as the absolute danger demanding further ecotechnical interdependency, further integration of substitutable systems. This firm grip on managing the future inevitably see-saws into resignation, into the realization that Judgment Day cannot be indefinitely deferred. But this resignation satisfies another deep desire, namely the complete liquidation of the past, a wiping clean of the slate of past debts and obligations. As a repression of the temporal sublime, Judgment Day is both the specter that drives the proliferation of catastrophic equivalence and its consequence.

To make this diagnosis more concrete, we can turn to Potawatomi scholar Kyle Powys Whyte's (2018) critique of settler environmental rhetoric surrounding the Anthropocene and apocalypticism more generally. Whyte notes that settler apocalyptic narratives, proposed as the effort of stopping "a dreaded future movement from stability to crisis," erase the legacies of colonial violence that have been experienced by many Indigenous people as repeated and ongoing apocalypses (227). As Anishinaabe scholar Lawrence Gross (2014) writes, "Native Americans have seen the ends of their respective worlds. . . . Indians survived the apocalypse" (233). Drawing on the work of Tahltan scholar Candis Callison, Whyte notes that "the hardships many nonIndigenous people dread most of the climate crisis are ones that Indigenous people have endured already due to different forms of colonialism: ecosystem collapse, species loss, economic crash, drastic relocation, and cultural disintegration" (226). Furthermore, by seeking to liquidate the past and the present in a new beginning, the settler apocalyptic narrative imagines for itself an innocent future, one in which all obligations and debts for past and present colonial violence are assumed to be discharged. While Whyte's discussion here concerns the experience of Indigenous Americans specifically, his critique of settler colonialism can easily be extended to the historically linked legacy of enslavement. Historian Gerald Horne (2018) writes that "[w]hat is euphemistically referred to as 'modernity' is marked with the indelible stain of what might be termed the Three Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Slavery, White Supremacy, and Capitalism" (9). Such considerations trouble the ubiquitous narratives that, from some quarters, announce climate change as *the* apocalypse to come while turning a blind eye to the past and continuing violence that has made the present world a possibility. How might different narratives, guided by a different image of time, do justice to these experiences?

## THE DEEP TEMPORAL SUBLIME AND THE SINGULAR PRESENT

Breaking with the apocalyptic image of time requires, first, that we come to terms with the plexity of deep time, and second, that we rediscover the singularity of the unique and non-substitutable present. On the first point, the explosion of our temporal horizons far beyond the limits of human history considered by Hume or Kant, and the parallel opening of a deep temporal future that continues beyond human extinction, confront us with the fact that our personal and historical temporalities are entangled and shot through with anachronistic and incompossible durations—those of our evolutionary history, for example, and, further still, of our own elemental materiality. Michel Serres (2018), explaining what he calls the Grand Narrative, the topologically folded multiplex of temporal scales, writes the following: "The senses open the body on to the world, it is said; no, they make us descend into an immemorial duration, towards long lost environments" (12). The experience of the deep temporal sublime is characterized precisely by its incommensurability with the narrative structures of personal and cultural history, by the vertigo of losing all common markers and measures. This testifies to our entanglement in a past that was never our own possibility, never our own memory—an impossible and immemorial past. Indeed, the very "depth" of geological time is the bottomless free-fall into which it throws all markers and touchstones by which we orient ourselves within the temporal horizons of our world. The schema of general equivalence is our unsuccessful attempt to repress this abyssal vertigo.

If we give up the effort to regiment time within general equivalence, then we open ourselves to our ongoing involvement, both material and symbolic, in time's incommensurable vectors and scales: cosmic, geological, elemental, organic, evolutionary. As Serres writes, "[i]nsofar as I am a memory, I participate in things. Insofar as they are things, they have memory" (32). The encounter with the vertigo of deep time is thus the echo within us of evolutionary memory and the asubjective time of matter, which anachronistically interrupt our lived experiences of time from within. A full accounting of the temporal sublime would therefore recognize the confluence of the immemorial past and future in its cosmic, geological, evolutionary, and organic trajectories as a tangle of rhythms, durations, and memories. This takes us well beyond an image of time as linear or metrical; it is instead multiple, folded, percolating. In Serres's words, time flows "according to an extraordinarily complex mixture, as though it reflected stopping points, ruptures, deep wells, chimneys of thunderous acceleration, rendings, gaps—all sown at random, at least in a visible disorder" (Serres and Latour 1995, 57). Because of this non-linear plexity, what seems closest to us chronologically may in fact be distant, while often what we believe to be out-of-date is fully contemporary.

Doing justice to our entanglement in a chaotic multiplicity of durations and memories means breaking with the homogenous leveling of time into substitutable and homogenous units, what, following Nancy, we have called its catastrophic equivalence. To break with this leveling of time requires recognizing the *non-equivalence* of the unique and non-substitutable events and moments that compose our lives, moments that cannot be exchanged precisely

because of their entanglement in the plexities of the past and future. To recognize this singularity of every moment deepens our respect for the present, understood not as an immediate or ephemeral "now," but rather as the time of manifestation in which someone or something, always singular and incommensurable, presents itself. The singularity of what appears in the non-substitutable present demands from us an attention and respect, an esteem for the inestimable (Nancy 2015, 39-40). Wendell Berry (2015), the leading proponent of agrarian ideals in the United States, expresses what may be a parallel sentiment when he writes that:

> [w]e are always ready to set aside our present life, even our present happiness, to peruse the menu of future exterminations. If the future is threatened by the present, which it undoubtedly is, then the present is more threatened, and often is annihilated, by the future. (174)

Nancy (2017) sometimes speaks about the moment of presence as an interruption or suspension of continuity, a deferral of time's self-presentation, in favor of a relationship that demands a gesture or a response (119-21). Yet we see that what presents itself to us, what demands our esteem and our response here and now, may itself be of the past or of the future. A recovery of the present outside the calculable general equivalence of time also places us in an entirely different relationship to pasts that have created our present possibilities and to futures that we do not plan or project.[9] Responsibility to the present therefore already involves us in the demands of justice for the past and the future. How might we work with such an image of time responsibly in the era of climate change?

For one profound example of how such temporal justice might be enacted we can turn again to the work of Whyte. In contrast with settler narratives of "*finality* and *last-ness*," Whyte (2018) describes Indigenous experiences of "spiraling time" that maintain a continuous dialogue with one's ancestors and descendants (229, emphasis in original). Whyte's account situates these experiences of time within specific Indigenous cultural contexts, yet he also invites non-Indigenous allies to engage in "counterfactual dialogue" and critical reflection on how the world that we inhabit today—that is, the world of colonial violence as well as climate change—is the dream and the gift of our settler ancestors, designed and constructed to "fulfill their fantasies of the future" and to "provide privileges to their descendants" (229; 237). Acknowledging that we are living the fantasy of our ancestors simultaneously opens a dialogue with our descendants, who pose to us the question of what kind of ancestors we ourselves will be, and what kind of world we will leave to those who follow. Counterfactual or fictional dialogue operates here not as an escape from our responsibilities to past and future, as we have seen in apocalyptic narratives, but rather as active affirmation of a spiraling of time that binds the manifestive present to the past that conditions it and the futures that it makes possible or forecloses. In contrast with the calculative management of

[9] On the need to break from finality itself, i.e., "from aiming, from planning, and projecting a future in general" and instead to work with "other futures," see Nancy (2015, 37). On our ongoing responsibility to "watch out" for the future, see Nancy (2015, 64 n. 4). On the past that is constitutive of our present possibilities, see Wood (2017) on "Constitutive Time" and Toadvine (2014).

the future on the basis of the substitutability of homogenous times, and the linear finality of a Judgment Day that liquidates both past and future, such time spiraling interrupts and thickens the event of the present, in its inestimable singularity, with an anti-apocalyptic and anti-colonial figure of temporal justice.

I close with one final example of how we might think the *now* in an anti-apocalyptic mode, in this case through the work of art. *Library of Water* is a long-term installation by New York-based artist Roni Horn that occupies a former municipal library in the small town of Stykkishólmur on the southwest coast of Iceland. The building is situated on a high rock promontory overlooking Breidafjordur bay, where its expansive windows reflect the meeting point of earth, sky, and water. Horn has described this space, which hosts community activities as well as private contemplation, as "a lighthouse in which the viewer becomes the light" (Artangel 2007). The central installation, titled "Water, Selected," consists of 24 floor-to-ceiling glass columns, each of which contains water collected from the ice of one of Iceland's major glaciers. Unsurprisingly, these glaciers are retreating at the fastest recorded rates, and one of those represented in the installation—Okjökull—is now classified as "dead" by glaciologists due to climate disruption. The glass columns reflect and refract light from the windows, from each other, and from visitors as they move through their irregular arrangement. The floor on which they stand is embedded with words in Icelandic and English representing the weather. Since each glacier has a distinctive chemical and mineral content, no two columns are identical, and each displays a unique footprint of sediments. With proper names representing the glaciers from which they were drawn, these columns face the visitor like clustering and dispersed figures, solitary yet interacting through plays of light mediated by water and glass. As Janet Fiskio has observed, the glass of each column echoes the ice of the glaciers without any pretense of representation or substitution.[10] These are not the glaciers themselves, in their varying states of precarity, but precisely their absence, the library and archive of their present and future memory. They are the future ruins of the Icelandic landscape and simultaneously a counter-Narcissus that involves the viewer in their predicament. The work thereby conveys, on the one hand, the excess of the glaciers beyond any possible preservation or representation; their elemental duration cannot be encompassed by any human world. And, on their other hand, it reveals their entanglement in a history and culture that ultimately threatens their disappearance.

Like the spiraling time that Whyte describes, *Library of Water* binds our singular present to a non-substitutable past and future, now at a grander temporal scale. The glacial water remembers annual snowfalls over the course of millennia, gradually compressed into solid ice by the pressure of patient accumulation. The disappearance of a glacier is literally the liquidation of this past. The proper names of the glaciers reflect their role in the history and culture of Iceland; current rates of glacial retreat have been compared with their historical extent by tracing the journeys recorded in the tenth and eleventh-century Icelandic Sagas. By naming the installation a library, Horn gestures to the indefinite future for which these

[10] Personal communication with the author.

memories are preserved. Furthermore, the multilingual terms for weather embedded in the floor also remind us of our temporality: Serres observes that "[t]he French language in its wisdom uses the same word for weather and time, *le temps*. At a profound level they are the same thing" (Serres and Latour 1995, 58).

My aim here has been to consider what image of time might break with the apocalyptic narratives that structure our approach to climate change. This requires first coming to terms with the folded, nonlinear, incommensurable, and rich multiplicity of time. As Serres points out, none of the European tradition's great thinkers of time—Bergson, Husserl, Heidegger—ever completed a transatlantic flight (2018, 11). But does not the mundane experience of jetlag teach us something about our corporeal entanglement in the plexities of time that would be difficult to learn in any other way? Furthermore, we must break with the catastrophic equivalence that homogenizes the singular moments of our lives, the present in which something inestimable, incalculable, presents itself to us and demands our response. How are we to live in the heartbreaking present? One example is provided in Whyte's account of spiraling time. This is an example to be approached with care, since Whyte is not proposing a general or universal experience of time but rather describing an experience and practice specific to Indigenous communities. Yet in urging non-Indigenous allies to take responsibility for their ancestral fantasies, Whyte suggests an obligation of spiraling temporal justice that extends to settlers as well at intergenerational scales. At the scale of elemental time, *Library of Water* expresses our predicament in the geological *now* by inviting us to register the links of memory that bind the glacial past to the far future, and to work with other futures on the basis of the inestimable present.[11]

## REFERENCES

Artangel. 2007. "Vatnasafn/Library of Water." https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/library-of-water/.

Benjamin, Andrew. 2017. "The World in Ruins: Heidegger, Poussin, Kiefer." *Journal of Aesthetics and Phenomenology* 4 (2): 101–23.

Berry, Wendell. 2015. *Our Only World: Ten Essays*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press.

Brady, Emily. 2013. *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

[11] A longer version of this essay was presented at the 2019 Collegium Phaenomenologicum, and the author thanks the participants for their discussion and suggestions. An earlier version of portions of this essay appeared in Toadvine 2020, which addresses in more detail the temporality of apocalyptic narratives in popular climate change rhetoric.

Brummett, Barry. 1984. "Premillenial Apocalyptic as a Rhetorical Genre." *Central States Speech Journal* 35 (2): 84–93.

Buell, Frederick. 2010. "A Short History of Environmental Apocalypse." In *Future Ethics: Climate Change and Apocalyptic Imagination*, edited by Stefan Skrimshire, 13–36. London: Bloomsbury.

Butler, Judith. 2009. "Critique, Dissent, Disciplinarity." *Critical Inquiry* 35 (4): 773–95.

Collings, David. 2014. *Stolen Future, Broken Present: The Human Significance of Climate Change*. Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press.

Derrida, Jacques. 2007. *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, Volume 1. Edited by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Foust, Christina R. and William O'Shannon Murphy. 2009. "Revealing and Reframing Apocalyptic Tragedy in Global Warming Discourse." *Environmental Communication* 3 (2): 151–67.

Greenpeace International. 2009. "Horsemen of the Apocalypse Descend on Copenhagen." *Scoop Independent News*, December 16. http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO0912/S00466.htm

Gross, Lawrence W. 2014. *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being*. New York: Routledge.

Haller, Albrecht von. 2002. "Unvollkommenes Gedicht über die Ewigkeit / Uncompleted Poem on Eternity." Translated by Arnulf Zweig. *The Philosophical Forum* 33 (3): 304–11.

Horne, Gerald. 2018. *The Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism: The Roots of Slavery, White Supremacy, and Capitalism in Seventeenth-Century North America and the Caribbean*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Hume, David. 2007. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Volume 1. Edited by David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hutton, James. 1788. *Theory of the Earth.* Edinburgh: Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Jones, Ben. 2017. "The Challenges of Ideal Theory and Appeal of Secular Apocalyptic Thought." *European Journal of Political Theory* (Online First): 1–24.

Jordans, Frank and Monika Scislowska. 2018. "Climate Change is 'Most Important Issue We Face,' UN Chief Says," *PBS*, December 3. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/climate-change-is-most-important-issue-we-face-un-chief-says.

Kant, Immanuel. 1987. *The Critique of Judgment*. Translated by Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing.

———. 1996. *Religion and Rational Theology*. Translated and edited by Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2007. *Anthropology, History and Education*. Edited by Robert B. Louden and Günter Zöller. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Killingsworth, M. Jimmie and Jacqueline S. Palmer. 1996. "Millenial Ecology: The Apocalyptic Narrative from *Silent Spring* to Global Warming." In *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America*, edited by Carl G. Herndl and Stuart C. Brown, 21–45. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Klein, Naomi. 2014. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. 1997. *The Sense of the World*. Translated by Jeffrey S. Librett. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

———. 2015. *After Fukushima: The Equivalence of Catastrophes*. Translated by Charlotte Mandell. New York: Fordham University Press.

———. 2017. *The Possibility of a World: Conversations with Pierre-Philippe Jandin*. Translated by Travis Holloway and Flor Méchain. New York: Fordham University Press.

Nordhaus, Ted and Michael Shellenberger. 2007. *Break Through: From the Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Playfair, John. 1822. *The Works of John Playfair, Esq., Volume 4*. Edinburgh: A. Constable & Co.

Royal Society of Edinburgh. 1788. *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*. Edinburgh: Royal Society of Edinburgh. https://archive.org/details/transactionsofro01roya/page/n7/mode/2up.

Serres, Michel. 2018. *The Incandescent*. Translated by Randolph Burks. London: Bloomsbury.

Serres, Michel and Bruno Latour. 1995. *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*. Translated by Roxanne Lapidus. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Skrimshire, Stefan. 2014. "Climate Change and Apocalyptic Faith." *WIREs Climate Change* 5 (2): 233–46.

Toadvine, Ted. 2014. "The Elemental Past." *Research in Phenomenology* 44 (2): 262–79.

———. 2020. "Climate Apocalypticism and the Temporal Sublime." In *Environmental Ethics: Cross-Cultural Explorations*, edited by Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach and Mădălina Diaconu, 115–31. Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber.

United Nations, n.d. "Climate Change." Accesesd June 1, 2020. https://web.archive.org/web/20190525005813/https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/climate-change/.

Whyte, Kyle Powys. 2018. "Indigenous Science (Fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral Dystopias and Fantasies of Climate Change Crises." *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 1 (1–2): 224–42.

Wood, David. 2017. "Temporal Phronesis in the Anthropocene." *Research in Phenomenology* 47 (2): 220–27.

The World Bank. 2018. "Nearly Half the World Lives on Less than $5.50 a Day," October 17. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/10/17/nearly-half-the-world-lives-on-less-than-550-a-day.