

The Epistemic Import of Affectivity: A Husserlian Account

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There has been an uptick of interest in affectivity among philosophers in a variety of camps recently, not only in analytic areas like the philosophy of mind and epistemology, where work has increasingly focused on the epistemic roles of the body and emotion, but also in scholarship in feminist philosophy and literary theory, which has focused on affect as a site of change and of oppression centered on gendered and sexed bodies, or the body as a site of “the cultural politics of emotion.”¹ Across these diverse domains of inquiry, phenomenology has played a central role.

Phenomenological accounts of affect, as Thomas Fuchs has recently argued, begin from the assumption that “affects are not mental states in the immanence of the subject that we project onto an otherwise indifferent sum of objects. Rather, they are modes of bodily attunement to, and engagement with, the lived world.” On the phenomenological conception, “It is only through our affectivity that we find ourselves in a meaningful environment in which persons and things matter for us, and in which we care for them as well as for ourselves. Affects are the very heart of our existence.”²

But the recent uptick of interest in affectivity among philosophers of various stripes, many of whom have turned to phenomenology because of these and other considerations such as the *embodied* nature of experience,

1. The phrase comes from Sara Ahmed (2006, 2014). For a general account, see Gregg and Seigworth (2010).

2. Fuchs (2013).

seems to speak against two prominent presuppositions of philosophers in the last century.

First, the presupposition according to which epistemological clarification is, for all philosophically relevant intents and purposes, conceptual or linguistic clarification. This presupposition is characteristic of both analytic and continental traditions, each of which underwent its own version of the linguistic turn. Phenomenology holds a unique position within this history, as both the birthplace of important continental exemplars of this turn (e.g., Derrida, Gadamer, arguably the later Heidegger), and, prior to this, as a site of resistance to the tendency toward exclusively linguistic and conceptual forms of analysis in analytic philosophy beginning with Frege.³ Feminist critiques of this presupposition in the context of recent literature concerned with affect have argued that exclusive focus on the linguistic or the discursive risks excluding embodied aspects of experience, important for diagnosing forms of oppression and for developing strategies of resistance not constrained by the current state of a given discourse. As Linda Alcoff puts it, “If meaningful experience must pass the test of discursive formulation, we will preclude the inarticulate from the realm of knowledge, a tendency which has nicely served the interests of Western masculinity by allowing it to ignore forms of oppression that could not be expressed under reigning regimes of discourse. A better view would be one which understood experience and discourse as imperfectly aligned, with locations of disjuncture.”⁴

The first presupposition is closely aligned to another, of Kantian inheritance, which is commonly understood in terms of the distinction between the “space of causes” and the “space of reasons.” To cite the canonical passage from Wilfrid Sellars, “in characterizing an episode or a state as that of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says.”⁵ This claim is of a piece with Sellars’s well known critique of the “myth of the given,” in line with which not only empiricists but also phenomenologists have often been found guilty.⁶ In order to preempt accounts according to which nonrational “givens” can be said to impinge upon the rational or inferential sphere from a realm outside of thought (or, more generously, “outside thinkable contents”⁷), Sellars advocates a strict separation between conceptual, inferential accounts and explanations that fall within “the space of reasons,” on the one hand, and noninferential or empirical ones, which fall within “the space of causes,” on the other. This distinction has itself become something of a dogma for certain strands of later twentieth

3. Rump (forthcoming).

4. Alcoff (2000).

5. Sellars (1997, §36).

6. See Sachs (2014).

7. McDowell (1996, 28).

century analytic epistemology, especially for theorists who take seriously Sellars's call to move the discipline "from its Humean to its Kantian phase."⁸

Taken together, these two presuppositions lead to an ambiguity when we try, with contemporary theorists and philosophers of various stripes, to take seriously the *meaningfulness of affective life*, for this meaningfulness seems neither to be of a linguistic or conceptual nature, nor to fit neatly in the space of causes or the space of reasons.

I attend a significant political rally—say, the Women's March on Washington. In contrast to the heavy feeling of depression and frustration that has accompanied my thinking about all things political for the past few weeks, I experience affects of pride and exuberance, a lightness in my chest and in my step and an existential sense of well-being,⁹ a sense that everything's going to be all right. And while there is without a doubt a sort of internal monologue that accompanies me at the rally, and explicit thinking about similar historical events and the relations between the various political concepts necessary for understanding and effecting social change, there is also—independent of all the words and concepts—a *feeling*; an *affective state* that characterizes my entire sense of being and my knowledge of the way the world, for me, at that moment, *is*. And this feeling does not seem to me merely accompany my conceptual or linguistic ruminations, or even to be derived from them. It seems, in a certain very tangible, even bodily sense, to precede or undergird them. It is, in some difficult to explain way, why they matter or are meaningful at all.

If, as Fuchs argues, affects are at the very heart of our existence, and if the account above is also accurate in its portrayal of affectivity as a sort of embodied phenomenon and not *simply* a mental state or a structure characterizable in terms of language or concepts, then, given the sorts of presuppositions noted above, how can affectivity still be responsible for the meaningfulness and mattering of things? To push the question even further, how is it that affects have epistemic import, that is, relevance for my knowledge of a world—my world—of which my affective life undeniably plays a major part? If not in the space of causes or the space of reasons, in what sort of "space" does affectivity reside? This paper contributes to the recent literature on affectivity not by giving a phenomenological account of a particular affect or affective state, but by considering these general underlying epistemological questions.

I outline an answer to these questions by turning to the founding figure of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, but to a text which may at first seem an odd choice: Husserl's extremely abstract account of affectivity in the context of his mature, transcendental phenomenology, especially the lectures on "passive

8. See Brandom (2015). John McDowell (1996), as well as in his more recent work, would also fall in this camp. A closely related distinction is at play, for example, in Donald Davidson's (1986) claim that (nonpropositional) sensations or experiences cannot justify (propositional) beliefs, though his account is not explicitly linked to the Sellarsian project.

9. For the notion of "existential feeling," see Ratcliffe (2008).

synthesis” from the 1920s. While this account may offer fewer fine-grained phenomenological analyses of specific affective states than other texts in the Husserlian corpus, and is perhaps less detailed than other works in its treatment of affectivity in the context of an analysis of the lived body, it is in this work that he most directly addresses the systematic and specifically epistemological questions concerning the role of the affective raised above. By focusing on this abstract account of affectivity, I hope to clarify several important general epistemological features of affectivity according to Husserl’s systematic phenomenological approach.¹⁰ That approach seeks to describe the experiential structures according to which affectivity in any form could be understood to contribute to the structuring or constitution of experience as epistemically mattering or meaningful, in a way that does not assimilate such meaningfulness to that of language or concepts, and does not presuppose its limitation to inferential relations in the “space of reasons,” but also does not dismiss it as a content-less or purely third-personal, empirical phenomenon relegated to the space of causes.

Roughly, my interpretive claim will be the following. Affectivity, along with the closely related phenomenon of association, follows a form of *sui generis* lawfulness belonging to the domain of what Husserl calls *motivation*, which must be distinguished both (1) from the causal structures through which we understand the body third-personally, as a material thing; and also (2) from the rational or inferential structures at the level of deliberative judgment traditionally understood to be the domain of epistemic import. In effect, in addition to recognizing a “space of causes” and a “space of reasons,” Husserl’s account of affectivity and the epistemology of passive synthesis in which it is situated suggest that we should recognize a separate “space of motivations.” Within this space, on Husserl’s phenomenological picture, we can isolate two different sorts of epistemic import, one belonging directly to the passive-synthetic *content* of experience, as explained in Husserl’s account of association and his closely aligned notion of nonlinguistic sense, and a second—my primary focus—affectivity, which is still relevant for that content, albeit indirectly, and holds epistemic import in its determination not of *what* that content is but of *how* it comes to matter for us.

I. LOCATING AFFECTIVITY

A passage from a 1978 essay by the psychologist Silvan Tomkins—often considered the founding figure of affect theory in psychology and a commonly cited source for the recent uptick of interest in affectivity in the domain of

10. I am thus assuming that Husserl’s account of affection *is* intended to apply to the embodied phenomena contemporary philosophers treat under the moniker of affectivity. This presupposition is common in the literature. Cf. Kozyreva: “[In Husserl] we should consider affection as a general term which may refer to different subgroups but is merely intended to designate a passive, original correlation between the affecting and the affected, without any implication on what particular qualities it may have” (2017, 115f). For a different view, see Bégout (2000, 167ff.).

literary studies and feminist philosophy—can serve as a starting point. Tomkins locates his conception of affect via the work of Kant. In Tomkins’s words, Kant

likened the human mind to a glass which imprinted its shape on whatever liquid was poured into the glass. Thus, space, time, causality, he thought, were constructions of the human mind imposing the categories of pure reason upon the outside thing-in-itself, whose ultimate nature necessarily forever escaped us. I am suggesting that he neglected a major filtering mechanism, the innate affects, which necessarily color our every experience of the world, constituting not only special categorization of every experience but producing a unique set of categorical imperatives which amplify not only what precedes and activates each affect but which also amplify the further *responses* which are prompted by affects.¹¹

What is illustrative here is Tomkins’s assertion about the “special categorization” and location of affect in the Kantian picture of experience. He suggests, in effect, that we understand affectivity as an addition to Kant’s account of how the mind brings meaning to experience.

For Kant, of course, there is an important distinction between different sorts of “constructions of the human mind” that is glossed over in the passage: space and time, on the one hand, are *a priori forms of intuition*, belonging to the “transcendental aesthetic.” Causality, on the other hand, is properly a “category of pure reason,” as Tomkins suggests, and falls for Kant under the purview of “transcendental logic,” whose task is the derivation and explanation of the concepts which are applied to intuition in experience. In Kant’s famous dictum that “thoughts without intuitions are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind,”¹² then, of Tomkins’s three examples of “constructions of the human mind” (space, time, and causality), properly speaking, only causality falls on the side of concepts. Without conceptuality, on at least one prominent reading of Kant, experience literally lacks any intelligible content at all: spatial and temporal intuitions on their own, not brought under the provenance of concepts, are “blind” and lack all intelligibility or “thinkability.”¹³

On the other hand, conceptual categories devoid of spatio-temporal intuitions are *empty*: they are not experiences but only the categories of understanding that can help to *explain* our experience. In claiming that they are a different sort of “coloring” of our experience, Tomkins is claiming that affects do in fact play an intelligible, epistemic role in experience: they are not merely “blind” intuitions or sensations. At the same time, they are, on Tomkins’s psychological picture, ultimately biologically rooted—innate. Thus

11. Tomkins (1995, 95–96).

12. Kant (1998, B75).

13. This is McDowell’s view in *Mind and World* (1996). For a criticism of this sort of Kantian conceptualism, see Rump (2014).

it also seems wrong to think of affectivity as a purely conceptual matter to be sorted alongside the understanding.

Outside of the passage above, Tomkins tends to make this point not in Kantian philosophical terms but by contrasting his affect theory to both behaviorist and cognitivist approaches in his own domain of psychology. He views both approaches critically. Cognitivist theories were themselves a response, Tomkins notes, to the behaviorist theories that dominated American psychology earlier in the twentieth century: “Like any imperialist enterprise, behaviorism swept out of power not just one competitor—consciousness and introspection—but all its fellow travelers—cognition, motivation, memory, and perception—and replaced them with conceptual puppets.”¹⁴ Against behaviorism, cognitivism focused exclusively on the representational and conceptual capacities of consciousness and attempted to represent all states—including affective ones—in line with a conception of “pure cognition.” In doing so, it overlooked or ignored the varieties of mechanism responsible for evoking affect: not only cognition but also things like perception and other affects or feelings.¹⁵ Tomkins’s account of affect seeks to avoid both of these extremes—to avoid, as M. Brewster Smith puts it in his introduction to *Exploring Affects: The Selected Writings of Silvan S. Tomkins* (1995), the common dichotomy between “hermeneutic” and “causal-explanatory” paradigms in psychology.¹⁶

Note how Tomkins’s strategy maps on to the dichotomy between the space of causes and the space of reasons: the behaviorist paradigm, like natural-scientific or biological explanation in the space of causes, seeks to “explain” by reducing first-person experience to quantifiable empirical data available to us third-personally—a “view from nowhere” which ignores the reality of consciousness or inner life.¹⁷ Against this, Tomkins argues, the cognitivist simply moves to the other extreme, taking up all embodied processes into a rational, conceptual schema that legislates, as it were, “from the head,” and ignores our embodied being and our embeddedness in a complex emotional and intersubjective world. It is against the backdrop of this dialectic that Tomkins calls for an “affective revolution” in order “to emancipate this radical new development from an overly imperialistic cognitive theory.”¹⁸

Of course, the “cognitive revolution” in the second half of the twentieth century was not limited to psychology: it characterized attempts to understand

14. Tomkins (2008, 639).

15. Tomkins (2008, 645).

16. Smith, Introduction to Tomkins (1995, 10).

17. See Nagel (1989).

18. Tomkins (2008, 640). In this and similar passages, Tomkins credits cognitivism with the simultaneous emancipation of psychology not only from behaviorism but also from psychoanalysis. Since Tomkins has in mind psychoanalysis of the Freudian variety, and not the notion of unconscious experience as such (as applies to the Husserlian account of passive synthesis I offer below), I have not focused on this additional complicating factor of his account.

the mind in a wide variety of disciplines across the academy, including philosophy.¹⁹ Indeed, it is quite plausible to situate the Sellarsian strand of conceptualism—which can itself be read as a critical reaction to behaviorism²⁰—within this broader cognitivist pedigree. This thoroughgoing cognitivism is precisely the sort of view that recent work on affect, with its focus on the lived body as a site of experience that eludes exhaustive conceptual or linguistic articulation, has called into question.

In the philosophical arena, then, and with regard to the epistemological questions raised above, what are we to make of Tomkins's claim that affects function as a *different* sort of "filtering mechanism"; a *different* kind of "special categorization"? On the Kantian schema, where do they belong? It seems that affects sit uncomfortably in either Kantian transcendental logic or the Kantian transcendental aesthetic. To make room for affect, this way of dividing things up will need to be rejected or at least revised.

II. HUSSERL'S TRANSCENDENTAL AESTHETIC: THE PROBLEM OF PASSIVE-SYNTHETIC CONTENT

To see how we might do this, we can turn to Husserl, who first called our attention to the importance of a phenomenology of the body, and who, unlike some later phenomenologists whose accounts of affectivity or the body are perhaps better known, continued to see his project in epistemological terms.²¹ As Husserl began to work out the details of a phenomenological account of the *constitution* of meaning in his later genetic phenomenology, he began to see his project as an attempt to expand the Kantian transcendental aesthetic. Husserl insists that Kant's account of the origination of meaningful experience in space and time as the *a priori* forms of intuition is explanatory only at the level of a Newtonian science concerned with physical objects:

[H]is question is only this: What kinds of syntheses must be carried out subjectively in order for the things of nature to be able to appear, and thus a nature in general. But lying deeper and essentially preceding this is the problem of the inner, the purely immanent objectlike formation and the constitution, as it were, of the inner-world, that is, precisely the constitution of the subject's stream of lived-experience as being for itself, as the field of all being proper to it as its very own. ... [T]he constitutive problems of the world presuppose the doctrine of the necessary, most general structures and the synthetic shapes of immanence that are possible in general. Hence, we are to seek here in immanence what are in principle the most general syntheses, especially, as we said, the

19. See the Introduction to Bruner (1990).

20. See Tripodi (2011).

21. See, for example, Béatrice Han-Pile's (2006) treatment of Heidegger's and Sartre's accounts of affectivity as ontological rather than epistemological.

syntheses concerning *content* that extend beyond the transcendental synthesis of time, and which as such, according to their general character, are discernible as transcendently necessary. Our task, therefore, will be to seek precisely these syntheses.²²

The claim that we must look to syntheses “beyond the transcendental synthesis of time” has to do, for Husserl, with the exclusively formal nature of time as a form of intuition on the Kantian picture. Husserl’s claim is that a purely formal account of temporality as the constant underlying flow of experience will not be enough to explain the constitution of specific, differentiated experiential *content*. And yet the synthesis Husserl seeks is not the Kantian synthesis responsible for the constitution of physical objects. If we don’t already presuppose that the contents of consciousness are or are somehow reducible to the physical objects of natural science, then it doesn’t make sense to limit our account of the transcendental aesthetic to our intentional directedness toward what Husserl calls “spatio-wordly” objects. Husserl, who is concerned not only with the apodictic grounding of *natural scientific* inquiry but with the wider project of grounding meaning and knowledge *as such*, with an eye to the structures of their genesis, thus proposes a radical rethinking of the character of the field of intuition: an expansion of the transcendental aesthetic from the conditions for empirical objects to the broader domain of intentionality itself—ultimately, the whole of our *lifeworld*.²³

In addition to physical objects, Husserl insists that this world of our everyday lives is also characterized by a variety of other sorts of objects (where “object” [*Objekt* or *Gegenstand*] simply means anything to which an intentional act is directed).²⁴ In this sense, one’s love for one’s spouse can be an object, despite its irreducibility to any purely spatio-worldly entity or state. And even entities that we take not to exist in a broader sense, such as the monster I fear is hiding in my closet, are objects insofar as they are immanent to my lived experience and things to which an intentional act is directed (insofar as the monster is the *object* of my fear, and my fearing is an intentional act). That toward which intentionality is directed counts as an object in this sense whether the intention or anticipation results in fulfillment (as in the former case), nonfulfillment (as when I open the closet but do not as yet find the monster), or intentional frustration (as when I open the closet to find not a monster, but my cat).

Husserl thinks that an analysis of constitution of such objects must look “behind” the active syntheses of consciousness (or the ego) which we have come to understand through the paradigm of spatio-worldly objects to the prior constitutional structures which must have allowed those objects to first appear at all. By extending the analysis of the content of the lifeworld from consciousness’s active function of synthesis to this level “passive” synthesis,

22. Husserl (2001a, 171).

23. Rump (2014; forthcoming).

24. Cf. Drummond (2007, 148).

we seek to account for the constitution of objects (and “objectlike formations”²⁵) at a level that does not even rise to conscious awareness or, in Husserl’s terminology, becomes “thematic.” Central among the structures of this passive synthesis, on Husserl’s account, is affectivity or affection.²⁶

In the *Lectures Concerning Passive Synthesis*, Husserl defines this general notion of affection as follows:

By affection we understand the allure given to consciousness, the peculiar pull that an object given to consciousness exercises on the ego; it is a pull that is relaxed when the ego turns toward it attentively, and progresses from here, striving toward self-giving intuition, disclosing more and more of the self of the object [*das gegenständliche Selbst*], thus, striving toward an acquisition of knowledge, toward a more precise view of the object.²⁷

Affection is something that happens *to* consciousness; not something that derives *from it*; thus the location of this discussion in lectures on *passive* synthesis, which is a function of consciousness that Husserl insists is nonthematic and does not involve *self*-consciousness or self-awareness.²⁸ While the structure of affectivity extends below the level of conscious or “thematic” awareness to “modes of knowledge acquired in the lifeworld,” it is a structure that—due to its “subjective lawful” regularity—is open to reflective analysis from within consciousness and thus at the thematic level.²⁹

Husserl’s seemingly speculative account of passive synthesis raises a number of interpretive problems, notably those arising from the interplay of this insistence that there is a level of intentionality operating in “passivity,” independent of conscious awareness, and that this level is nonetheless characterized by a sort of “content.” As will be discussed in more detail below, Husserl’s accounts of passive synthesis imply a register of content or meaning “below” and not reducible to linguistic meaning, a content that we encounter

25. Staying true to his phenomenological, purely descriptive approach, Husserl insists that at the most basic level of passive synthesis, associative syntheses do not yet constitute full-blown perceptual objects but only “objectlike formations” [*Gegenständlichkeiten*]. In the inquiry into the absolutely most basic contentful level of passive synthesis, we cannot presuppose already constituted objects, since association is precisely that which is supposed to first explain the constitution of objects: “concrete objects are not what is elementary here, but rather object phases, sensible points, so to speak” (Husserl 2001a, 213) See also the translator’s introduction (xlii); Husserl (1973, note to §17).

26. Thus far in this essay I have used the term “affectivity,” in line with contemporary work. Husserl typically uses the somewhat more general term *Affektion* (usually translated as “affection”), and occasionally *Gemütsbefahrung*, in the case of descriptions of affections specifically as emotional states. In line with the general epistemological focus of this paper, I will henceforth use the terms “affection” and “affect” in laying out Husserl’s views.

27. Husserl (2001a, 196).

28. Husserl even refers to his account of passive synthesis at times as a “philosophy of the unconscious” (2001a, 201, 214). Cf. Kozyreva (2017, 74).

29. Husserl (2001a, 198).

directly in perceptual experience and which he typically refers to as “sense.” But this notion risks moving too far in the direction of a naïve empiricism, and threatens to dissolve the distinction between sensation and meaning. If all *Sinnlichkeit* is already *Sinnhaftigkeit*, then it seems that we are dangerously close to a version of the myth of the given, in which meaningful content is somehow simply “read off” the world, without any of the complexities of intentionality and of the phenomenon of constitution which the original notion of *synthesis*—going back to Kant—is meant to imply. If we are, in line with Sellars, to situate passive synthetic content in some sort of epistemic space, and not to give merely empirical descriptions of it, we will need to explain how, while not linguistic or conceptual as on the Sellarsian view, it nonetheless carries epistemic import.³⁰ This question concerning the content of passive synthesis generally will lead us to our more specific question about affectivity. If affectivity can be shown to somehow police the boundary between mere *Sinnlichkeit* and epistemically meaningful *Sinnhaftigkeit*, if it can be shown to be somehow contribute to the constitution of passive-synthetic content even if it is not itself that content, it will have been shown to have epistemic import.

III. ASSOCIATION AND SENSE

Husserl’s account of the systematic structures of passive synthesis is divided into different layers. The most primary layer, the first consideration in the understanding of passive synthesis, is the flow of time itself.³¹ But passive synthesis is further characterized, in a second layer, by the phenomenon of association. The main account of affection in the passive synthesis lectures occurs after, and is contrasted with, an account of the phenomenology of “sense-fields,” which is itself the culmination of the section of the lecture course on association. It is only in the context of sense fields, and the associative syntheses of which they are composed, that affectivity comes to the fore as a central object of phenomenological study. The level of association is where we first encounter considerations that are not merely formal, but also involve a kind of *content*. In a way that mirrors the associationist psychology of the early modern empiricists, Husserl attempts to give an account of how, prior to thematic conscious awareness, the most basic data of the

30. The question of epistemic import has been answered differently within the scholarship on Husserl. Donn Welton has described the elements of Husserl’s expended transcendental aesthetic operative in passive synthesis as “a type of perceptual or aesthetic significance that Kant could only think of as ‘preconceptual’ and therefore, ‘precategorical.’” But while ascribing *significance* to such phenomena, Welton also understands passive synthetic structures, including affectivity, to be “*nonepistemic*” (2000, 298, my emphasis). Anthony Steinbock, by contrast, argues that “passive syntheses are *not without epistemic import*, and a transcendental aesthetic cannot be foreign to the problems of truth, evidence, and their modalizations” (Steinbock, translator’s intro to Husserl [2001a, xl], my emphasis).

31. Husserl (2001a, 170–71).

perceptual field are brought together into intentional unities on the basis of essential associative laws.³²

Unlike early modern accounts of association, however, Husserl's account is conceived as explicitly transcendental rather than empirical. For Husserl, empirical approaches all, at some level, involve a form of psychological naturalism: at some point in the inquiry, they shift from a purely descriptive psychology into an explanatory psychology, in which appeal is made to causal laws.³³ Empirical psychological approaches to association thus ultimately explain it as "a course of events similar to natural ones, [only] occurring in the quasi-space of consciousness,"³⁴ amounting to, on Husserl's view, "naturalistic distortions of the corresponding genuine, intentional concepts."³²

Husserl's transcendental-phenomenological account, by contrast, focuses exclusively on the immanent sphere given in the structures of intentionality, since "a concrete description of the sphere of consciousness as a self-enclosed sphere of intentionality (only in this way is it given concretely) has a totally different sense than descriptions of nature, thus than the exemplary descriptions in the descriptive natural sciences." The "concreteness" missing from empirical or natural-scientific accounts is that belonging to the immanent content of consciousness in the lifeworld, the same content that was missed on the Kantian account.

A concrete description of conscious lived experiences, those of perception, memory, predicative judgment, love, action, etc. also requires by necessity the descriptions of the objects "as such," the "intentional" objects, that one is conscious of in the respective lived experiences, that is, a description of the objects as they belong inseparably to the lived experience in question as its "objectively meant" (its objective sense).³⁵

Husserl's approach is "transcendental" insofar as it looks to the conditions of possibility immanent to the field of conscious experience in order to describe (not explain) relations of meaning bound by essential laws. It describes associations precisely as they are given to consciousness—as unities of meaning or sense.

The sort of meaning that arises in association is characterized in terms of sense [*Sinn*]. This more basic notion of meaning must not be confused with expressed or linguistic meaning, for which, in his later work, Husserl tends to reserve the term *Bedeutung*.³⁶ The level of association is the central point at which, as noted at the outset of this paper, Husserl's account contrasts with more mainstream twentieth century accounts of perception and knowledge that hew more closely to an exclusively linguistic or conceptual understanding of

32. Husserl (1960, 80).

33. Husserl (1989, 423).

34. Husserl (1989, 423), Cf. Kozyreva (2017, 93ff).

35. Husserl (1989, 424).

36. Rump (2014).

meaning. What is at issue for Husserl is not merely the phenomenon of meaning as an aspect of the philosophy of language but an epistemological concern with the very character of experience as a “sense-giving accomplishment,” one that is ongoing in the flow of time, in the continuation of our lives:

If one goes back from theory that is dead, so to speak, and has thus become objective, to the living, streaming life in which it arises in an evident manner, and if one reflectively investigates the intentionality of this evident judging, deducing, etc., one will immediately be led to the fact that what stands before us as the accomplishment of thought and was able to show itself linguistically rests upon deeper accomplishments of consciousness.³⁷

Such accomplishments of consciousness are taken to be both pre-linguistic, and—as will be important for our argument below—pre-predicative, that is, prior to the structures of explicit judgment on the basis of logical operations such as deduction and inference.

The “perceptual sense” arising through associative syntheses combines with the object’s co-present horizontal anticipations (further discussed below) to constitute the “objective sense” of a given object.³⁸ When we make a lived experience thematic by reflecting upon it, we discover “an evident consciousness of the identity of the content ... in each case we call this meant same object the objective sense of these lived-experiences.”³⁹ The notion of sense thus explains the “coinciding” of the same intentional objects across a series of perceptions over time, even in cases prior to linguistic mediation or explicit judgment.³⁹ For Husserl, then, our lived experience does not reveal a meaningless world that is first given shape by our language; we live in the ongoing flux of experience in a lifeworld that—even prior to our conscious awareness and reflection—is always-already imbued with sense.

In the progression of the lecture course, having described the function of associative synthesis and the corresponding passive constitution of sense, Husserl now zooms out, as it were, from the singular, atomistic description of passive sense constitution to consider the phenomenon of passive synthesis at the level of entire sense-fields. Appealing to the Aristotelian distinction between that which is “first in itself” and that which is “first for us” from the standpoint of explanatory knowledge, Husserl insists that we must inquire not only how individuated intentional objects come to prominence in isolation, but also how they are first able to do so within the context of a multiplicity—for in lived experience what is first for us is a *field of sense* and not singular unitary objects bearing sense, as it were, one at a time.⁴⁰ It is only here in the lecture course that Husserl turns directly to the phenomenon of affection.

37. Husserl (2001a, 32).

38. Welton (1977).

39. Husserl (2001a, 35).

40. Husserl (2001a, 165, 193ff). Cf. Welton (1977).

IV. AFFECTION

In other words, Husserl first lays out the basic structure of association and sense, independently of an account of affection, and then “layers on” the affective account.⁴¹ *Prima facie*, this might give the impression that, in the structures of passive synthesis, affection is somehow subservient to the forms of association and represents yet a third distinct layer, founded on both time-constitution and association. There is a certain truth to attributing a separate status to affective synthesis, in that it is not identical to the associative synthesis in which sense-objects originate at the level of “hyle” (sensible data). And yet, affective feelings are said by Husserl to be “co-original” with sensible data.²⁹ As he puts it further on in the lectures, while the disclosure of the temporal and local form of particular unities of intentional objects will speak to necessary hyletic conditions, “the actual formation of hyletic groups and particular data existing for themselves would still depend upon the remaining factor of affection that is not taken into account” in such disclosure.⁴² Affectivity is reserved for separate and subsequent treatment, then, not in order to indicate that it plays a tertiary or subservient role in the process of passive synthesis, but rather to emphasize that it fulfills a separate *function*: while contemporaneous with them, affections can be distinguished upon analysis both from sense-fields and from individual associative formations, even as the “actual emergence of unities” is dependent on affection as well as association.⁴³ Indeed, Husserl notes, affective unities must be constituted in order for a world of objects to be constituted in subjectivity *at all*.⁴⁴ While not synonymous with associative content, then, affectivity is at the very least a necessary condition for it. Without its function of “allure” *vis-à-vis* consciousness, there would be no objects for consciousness and *ipso facto* no content. Experience is affective all the way down. We can illustrate this claim by stepping back from our abstract considerations to consider a concrete case.

I am cooking dinner, half-listening to the news on the radio as I cook, but not really processing—listening in a background way, as it were, as I chop the onions, prepare the salad, and go about other routine kitchen tasks. I suddenly become aware of a sound bite from an all-too-familiar and much-despised politician, apparently being played as part of reporting piece. I am flushed with annoyance. Before I even begin to process the suspect rhetoric of his words, I find myself responding bodily—affectively—to the very sound of his voice. My cheeks redden and the muscles around my jaw tighten, the tension builds, and, as I become aware of what is happening, I think to

41. As Husserl himself admits, previously in the lectures, “we had studied the indivisible objectlike structure of the impressional living present without taking into consideration the differences of affection” (2001a, 212).

42. Husserl (2001a, 200).

43. Husserl (2001a, 201).

44. Husserl (2001a, 210).

myself, “I am getting increasingly upset at this story, and it is interrupting the general state of mindfulness that typically characterizes my evening cooking routine. I need to turn it off or change the station, before I become overly preoccupied and, in the process, burn the risotto.” I change the radio to a talk-free jazz station, and resume my happy after-work toils in the kitchen.

Let’s attempt to analyze this example of affection in Husserlian terms. Since originally the sound of the radio was in the background, and not the focus of my thematic awareness, which was directed to the cooking, we need to explain how it was that such an active shift in intentional directedness actually occurred—what Husserl, in the definition of affection cited above, called “the peculiar pull that an object given to consciousness exercises on the ego.” My previously rather nonspecific horizontal anticipations of the sound of the radio as background were interrupted by a series of continuous and relatively homogenous sound-moments that suddenly attracted my attention as a unity, in this case, by means of a negative affective valence. Other associative syntheses in the auditory sense field may have been occurring prior to this, but *this one* suddenly led to my “striving toward self-giving intuition” in an attempt to “disclose more and more of the self of the object.”

Obviously, both associative and affective structures are involved in the object’s shift from passivity to activity, to thematic focus of my attention. Recall Tomkins’s claim that affects “amplify not only what precedes and activates each affect but which also amplify the further *responses* which are prompted by affects”: as my annoyance at the voice on the radio increases alongside my increasing turning of attention toward it (and away from the risotto), the affect amplifies the object in my attention at the same time as the object of the attention amplifies the affect.

But what of the very constitution of this object in passivity? What ultimately came first here, the affection or the association? Is it the case that, in passivity, the awareness of the object of my political disdain caused my bodily affective feelings, and thus somehow preceded the affection, or is it rather the affection that first allowed for the associative unity in which the object (or the objectlike formation) was originally constituted for me? Husserl’s account of affection and association seems to bottom out in a vicious circle.⁴⁵

Husserl devotes an entire section of the passive synthesis lectures (§34) to addressing the circularity objection. It is not clear that he successfully answers the objection, but his proposed solution can help us to get at the issue of content with regard to affective (and not merely associative) syntheses. The central notion is that affection is present in all perceptual data, but in different degrees or gradations. While it would be wrong to say that affection simply and unproblematically *precedes* sense fields, Husserl claims that we are justified in saying that affection functions as a graduated structure which establishes a threshold of affective unity, a lawful sort of unity that is itself a condition of associative constitution:

45. For detailed discussion and debate of this issue, see Bégout (2000, 189–98); Steinbock (1995, 153–67).

If we follow the gradation inherent in the nature of affection, we will remain within the realm of intelligibility and of insight into essences, and then we will have no occasion to make up incomprehensible substructions that would *io ipso* take us beyond the sphere of essences. According to this methodological principle, we thus ascribe to every constituted prominent datum that is for itself [,] an affective allure [acting] on the ego. We can secure decisive insights into the essence of association when we comprehend the lawful structure pertaining to the function of affection, its peculiarity, and its dependence on essential conditions.⁴⁶

Husserl's claim is that the hyletic data brought together in association must have awakened the ego with an adequate degree of affective force in order for those components to have become intelligible—to have become senses available to thematic consciousness—at all. Note the passive phrasing that one is forced to employ in such descriptions: it would be misleading to describe this process of awakening in active terms, as if the entire process could be directly perceived by consciousness. This would be a correct mode of description for *active* synthesis, such as that which occurs when I consciously draw a conclusion on the basis of an object of thematic attention; for example, when the risotto burns and I actively judge that my disdain for the very voice of the political figure has trumped my cooking-concentration. But passive syntheses are precisely those that are supposed to occur before any active, reflective, or thematic awareness of consciousness. The point here—which is admittedly rather contentious—is that Husserl thinks that this supposedly purely passive phenomenon of graduated affection is open to phenomenological description.

This is just the sort of claim that worries detractors of Husserl's accounts of passive synthesis, who wonder whether what we are getting at this point is more a sort of “just so story” than a genuine phenomenological description of experience arising from the “things themselves.” Husserl himself is aware of this worry—hence his insistence in the passage above that this account of affection is not an “incomprehensible substruction” but rather the result of “decisive insights.” But what justifies this insistence? For Husserl, these insights are legitimate in that they follow from or are governed by a lawfulness that pervades even at the level of passive, nonthematic structures. Valid claims about the structure of affection prior to conscious awareness are possible because the affective is *itself* understood as lawful, only the lawfulness in play does not belong to traditional, propositional logic but rather to what Husserl calls “transcendental logic,” a notion which, like the transcendental aesthetic, Husserl adapts from the Kantian epistemic framework.

Even if we do not accept Husserl's solution to the vicious circle objection by means of the gradation of affection, we might still gain some insight into the problem of content and the question of the epistemic import of affectivity by further pursuing the claim that experience exhibits a form of lawfulness that governs affection. If physical laws allow us to delineate a

46. Husserl (2001a, 211).

space of causes, and rules of inference a space of reasons, the isolation of a set of laws unique to this domain of phenomenological inquiry might allow us to recognize a different sort of space—one in which the question of epistemic import can be understood and evaluated in terms that do not presuppose exclusively conceptual, linguistic, or propositional forms of intelligibility. But what exactly would such lawfulness amount to? While we will need to address relevant differences between the lawfulness of association and that of affection, we can begin by understanding their important commonality: both exhibit a basic type of lawfulness that Husserl calls “motivation.”

V. THE EPISTEMIC SPACE OF MOTIVATIONS

For Husserl *motivation* marks out a *sui generis* domain of the lawfulness of experience, one that, I argue, still carries epistemic import, but does not take the form of propositional or conceptual rationality, which Husserl preserves for traditional logic and determinative judgments—that which correlates to the traditional notion of inference and to the “space of reasons.” Three characteristics of motivation are important for our considerations.

First, Husserl characterizes motivation as the function of indication relations that hold between experiential unities that combine to form *horizons* of nonlinguistic sense. Indication is the relation in which some intentional object draws our attention to some other object. Already in the first *Logical Investigation*, this sort of meaning relation is explicitly distinguished from *expression* as the meaning relation that holds between linguistic signs. Indication pertains to acts of judgment, whether or not they rise to the level of expression, in the course of lived experience.⁴⁷ As Philip Walsh has formalized this notion in a recent paper, “X indicates Y insofar as a subject’s awareness of X *motivates* an awareness of Y. The ... character in question is an *affective* ‘felt-belonging’ between discrete contents of experience.”⁴⁸

In the context of Husserl’s later phenomenology, the distinction between expressed meaning and the predicative, on the one hand, and sense and the pre-predicative, on the other, is further elaborated, and becomes central for Husserl’s account of passive synthesis. The role of indication and motivation is extended from the active to the passive level, where it plays an important part in Husserl’s account of affection and the broader notion of perceptual horizons.

The notion of horizons spells out Husserl’s conviction that the ultimate field of phenomenological analysis is neither that of discourse, nor that of natural science, but rather the lifeworld—our everyday experience of the world as always already *meaningful*. As Jitendranath Mohanty puts it, on Husserl’s view, “*the world as a whole is always passively pre-given*, prior

47. Husserl (2001b, Investigation I, §2).

48. Walsh (2017), quotation modified.

to all self-consciously directed activity of thought. For the *world* in this sense is not the static totality of all objects but the endless horizon—a system of intentionality and anticipation—within which the given leads to the not-yet given.⁴⁹ Horizontal intentionality is a *system of motivations* that determine our anticipations as always anticipations *of*, just as our seeings are always seeings *as*, even in cases where such anticipations do not rise to the level of explicit, thematic expectations of which I am consciously aware.⁵⁰

We can distinguish between motivated horizontal possibilities for a given experience and the logical possibilities of that experience. Logical possibilities that remain unmotivated are “empty possibilities”: while conceivable, they are not understood in the course of experience to be *live* possibilities. To cite Husserl’s own example from *Ideas I*, it is *logically possible* that the table in front of me—which I see only perspectively—has ten legs. But this is a mere *empty* possibility; nothing in the course of my lived experience so far motivates this possibility: “Actual experience [*Erfahrung*]*—and not merely running through ‘possible,’ envisaged perceptions—furnishes an actual demonstration of positings that pertain to something real.*”⁵¹

Thus a second important aspect of motivation is the way in which it is rooted in our actual, *embodied* lived experience. Husserl notes, for example, that the movement of my eyes, of which I am not typically explicitly aware and which is not typically a voluntary process, “motivates” a corresponding series of perceptions of the object. In this sense “my relation to the object is on the one hand receptive and on the other hand definitely productive.”⁵² Lived bodily experience is governed by motivational regularities that are neither simply causal nor merely a matter of what is logically conceivable; the lived body is neither mere material, causal object, nor purely rational structure of which I am consciously aware.⁵³

The third important feature of motivation, which also distinguishes it from reason and inference typically understood, is that motivation is a specifically *historical* structure. Motivation contributes to horizontal anticipations for future experiences on the basis of “sedimentations” of previous acts, even when both acts and anticipations remain hidden from thematic consciousness.⁵⁴ Even at the level of passivity, our experience of things occurs in the context of a “web of motivation,” “built through and through from intentional rays, which, with their sense-content and their filled content, refer back and forth, and they let themselves be explicated in that the accomplishing subject can

49. Mohanty (1969, 141).

50. Within the structure of intentionality, Husserl distinguishes between explicit expectations and implicit anticipations. See Carr (2014, 36).

51. Husserl (2014, §140); Cf. Walsh (2017).

52. Husserl (1973, 83–84).

53. Al-Saji (2000; 2010).

54. Husserl (1989, 234).

enter into these nexuses.”⁵⁵ Even when, in the instant, I am not consciously aware of the web of motivation that helps to determine my actions or perceptions, I can return upon reflection to a moment of conscious experience and *explicate* the series of motivated sense-givings leading up to it, and I do so not on the basis of the timeless, universal rules of inference, but of my own lived and embodied experiential history.⁵⁶

To illustrate these characteristics of motivation in terms of our radio example, Husserl will say that the voice of the disdained politician came to felt prominence for me despite the radio remaining in the background of my consciousness because it *frustrated* my nonthematic horizontal anticipation that the sound would continue in roughly the same soft, soothing murmur characteristic of national public radio hosts. The previous moments of radio-host-voice *indicated* to me (albeit without my explicit awareness) the rough “shape” of the future auditory horizon, anticipations *motivated* (not caused; not inferred in a determinate and active judgment) by my previous intentional experience. The felt intentional frustration then motivated new horizontal anticipations which, when they rose to the level of conscious awareness as thematic expectations, motivated my active judging that the radio should be turned off.⁵⁷

VI. ISOLATING THE EPISTEMIC IMPORT OF THE AFFECTIVE

Having isolated a “space of motivations” and distinguished it from both the space of causes and the space of reasons, we can now proceed to distinguish between associative and affective motivational functions. Both affective and associative syntheses reside at the level of analysis that Husserl refers to as transcendental (as opposed to formal, traditional, or propositional) logic, the topic for which the passive synthesis lectures, including the account of affection discussed above, are to serve as an introduction.⁵⁸ Works such as *Experience and Judgment* and *Formal and Transcendental Logic* further develop this notion of transcendental logic by systematically outlining a pre-predicative level of the logical determination of sense.

The minimal conditions of intelligibility at this level are not rules of grammar or inference but sheer logical-material compatibility, which Husserl often describes in terms of noematic “core forms” and “core-stuffs.”⁵⁹ This notion is meant to explain how it is possible, in terms of the logic of material compatibility, that our experience coheres, that it *makes sense* as a whole in

55. Husserl (1989, 236).

56. Welton (1983, 246); Cf. Drummond (2007, 150).

57. As Husserl makes clear in *Ideas II*, the structure of motivations not only applies beyond the sphere of judgments to passive structures, including affection, but also operates between these spheres: “a judgment is motivated by another judgment in drawing a conclusion, but also ... in quite a different way, judgments are motivated by affects and affects by judgments” (Husserl (1989, §56).

58. See Steinbock, introduction to Husserl (2001a).

59. See Husserl (1969, Appendix I; cf Drummond 2003; Hanna 1984).

the ongoing progression of lived experience. For Husserl, this question is posed at the level of transcendental logic and is in an important sense independent of formal logical considerations pertaining to the mediation via language or concepts. To cite an example from the passive synthesis lectures, even in passive associative synthesis we cannot combine the “stuffs” of color data and sound data into a single immanent temporal datum because they share no material homogeneity or common “core form”: red data cannot be associated via the lawful relations of temporal continuity with B-sharp data in the same way that it can be with pink data. We can imagine a shade of red turning to pink in a series of continuous temporal moments; what would it even mean to perceive a shade of red turning to B-sharp in the same manner?⁶⁰

A similar lawfulness pertains in associative synthesis to cases of contrast: perception of the contrast between the soft voice of the radio host and the tyrannical tone of the politician relies on the material homogeneity of sound data capable of belonging to the same local sense field. The contrast between a tone and a color is not a perceptual contrast of the same sort, since the data necessarily belong to different sense-fields. Since the structure of meaning is taken to be “deeper” than the linguistic, expressive, or predicative, and to involve an underlying conception of “sense,” it is this lawfulness of material compatibility, not that of language, syntax, or grammar, that ultimately underwrites this basic meaningfulness or *significance* of lived experience.⁶¹ At the pre-predicative level, the logical-material compatibility of “core-forms” and “core-stuffs” functions as a minimal condition (necessary, but not sufficient) for the success or failure of our experience being *meaningful*.

In the passive synthesis lectures, Husserl assigns this notion of logical-material compatibility to *associative* syntheses, and *contrasts* this form of lawfulness with a different, specifically *affective* lawfulness. Summarizing previous moves in the lecture course, he writes,

[A]s we passed over to affection, we saw [at once that the way in which affection is distributed among immanently constituted objects and propagated (and with this how the entire living present, as it were, takes on a constantly varying affective relief) is in a certain way dependent upon the general structural lawfulness of the sphere of the present with respect to the typicality of its temporal and local configuration (organization of objects). The objects are grouped as enduring unities of coexistence, segregated according to sense-fields, and they form connected configurations in the local fields. ... [T]he *filling of these forms*, which makes the concrete formed unities possible, is subject to the special conditions of concrescence and contrast. *Affection accompanies the connections*; only insofar as the

60. Husserl (2001a, 188). The specific example is mine. While Husserl does not use the language of noematic core stuffs and core forms in this passage, the close similarity of this discussion to those in the appendix of *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (cited above) merit its inclusion.

61. Husserl (1969, 217, 221f.).

conditions of materially relevant or figurative homogeneity are fulfilled such that syntheses of coinciding can be formed in being adjoined or at a distance, can the affective framework exist and can the affections propagate, can the current affective force be augmented, etc.⁶²

While both are forms of motivation, the lawfulness of affection is *not* that of association. Whereas the latter governs the “filling of forms,” the former “accompanies” and “augments” that filling. Association’s lawfulness of material homogeneity is a necessary condition for affection, even as, as we saw above, an adequate degree of affection is necessary for associative syntheses to rise to the level of conscious awareness at all. In this sense, affection as a lawful structure of passive synthesis is not properly speaking an element of form *or* of content. Affection is a necessary and lawful structure of passive synthesis, but it is neither a spatiotemporal feature of the experience in a causal sense, nor a logical–material feature of associative contents.

On the basis of this Husserlian account, then, we can say that Tomkins, is, in fact, right: affectivity is a different sort of filtering mechanism, one that is neither an intuition nor a category or concept. It is a lawful structure that governs associative syntheses, but it neither *causes* them (as it would if it belonged to the space of causes) nor provides a schema for their content (as it would if it belonged in the space of reasons). It “colors” our experience in *some other way*.

This “other way,” the epistemic import unique to affection, can be isolated by looking more closely at the space of motivation by means of Husserl’s closely related notion of the “weight of experience.”⁶³ Husserl claims that there is something like a “weight” to our prior experiences, considered not just in terms of the intentional object’s conceptual content, but also in terms of the horizons of prior intentional acts, that contributes to the overall structure of the lived experience in line with the embodied and historical nature of motivation. This weight of experience helps to direct the intentional gaze to new objects or to determine our continued focus on the same object in new and different ways.

Husserl uses this notion to present an alternative explanation of Hume’s analysis of rolling a die in order to ascertain the possibility of an objective determination of probability.⁶⁴ For Husserl, contra Hume, the “feeling of necessity” involved in such cases implies an “objective necessity” that—as we saw above—cannot be attributed to causal–psychological features of association but rather corresponds to the immanent domain that the modern empiricists thought of in terms of relations of ideas.⁶⁵

62. Husserl (2001a, 212, my emphasis).

63. This notion is treated at length in Lohmar (1998, 219–25).

64. As Dieter Lohmar (1998, 219) notes, the fact that this passage from the 1906–07 lecture course on logic and the theory of knowledge is reproduced, with very few changes, as an appendix to the much later text *Experience and Judgment* testifies to the importance of the example for Husserl’s thinking on these issues.

Husserl contends that Hume's skepticism regarding "rationally justifiable relations" between experiential moments in such cases stems from his inability to recognize a "purely phenomenological" form of analysis that is located not in the human psyche but in the immanent structure of our lived experience, an analysis that "look[s] into the domain of judgments of experience which set forth general and necessary connections."⁶⁶ As Husserl puts it already in the 1907 version of this passage, if we "go through Hume's analyses step by step and just cut away the rampant weeds of the psychological interpretation," it becomes apparent that

it is not at all a question of the human mind and of influences it experiences [*erfährt*] on the basis of empirical-psychological regularity. Rather, we are simply taking a look at what is given, at the peculiar relationships of *motivation* [*Verhältnisse der Motivierung*], at the lived-experienceable quality [*erlebbaren Charakter*] that the universal assumption acquires from the *weight of earlier experiences* [*Gewicht der Erfahrungen*]. And, just as is usual in the realm of relations of ideas, we then perform a generalizing abstraction there in which we live through [*erleben*] a consciousness of law that allows us to see the principle of probabilities involved.⁶⁷

My concern here, of course, is not with the notion of probabilities as such, but with the idea that such epistemic functions can be understood in a way that is lawful, but neither causal, as in the sense of naturalistic inquiry or behaviorism, nor inferential in the sense of explicit conceptual or linguistic judgments or the related mental entities of cognitivism.

But the notion of the "weight of experience" suggests even more, for here the lawful effect of previous lived experience is not limited to the *content* of the experiencing: it is attributed to *the experiencing itself*. In the space of motivations, while the notion of associative synthesis may be enough to account for passive synthetic *content*, considered *statically*, this is not enough to explain the whole function of the notion of the "weight of experience," which is, in the final analysis, a *genetic* notion which arises on the basis of the inquiry into the ongoing constitution of meaning as a temporal and historical phenomenon. The remaining piece of the puzzle is *affection*. Only affection can ultimately capture the fact that, in the context of passivity, not only *is there* content; that content *comes to matter* for me in regular felt, embodied, and historically inflected ways. In this sense, the epistemic import of the affective is indeed something like an ultimate "given," but what is given is the most basic shaping of our striving for meaning-making itself.⁶⁸

65. Husserl (1973, 392).

66. Husserl (1973, 393).

67. Husserl (2008, 347–49, translation modified, my emphasis).

68. We might even say that this is a demonstration of what it means to "expand" the transcendental aesthetic beyond space and time as *a priori* conditions of the possibility of intuition; only in this case, contra Welton and in line with Steinbock, I am arguing that these expanded elements *are* epistemic, in a suitably broad, phenomenological sense.

Even if we cannot baptize affective phenomena themselves as a form of content (as linguistic meanings, or even, in the Husserlian framework, as nonlinguistic *senses*), if the ultimate object of our quest for knowledge is not simply empirical facts and logical relations, but the lifeworld, we can surely countenance them as real phenomena of epistemic import. When I am affected by the positive “vibe” at the Women’s March, or when my body responds, even before my active thinking, to the negative affect of the politician’s voice on the radio, I am, in an important, phenomenological sense, coming to *know* something about my lifeworld, a world in which not only concepts, but *feelings* have a history and affect my knowing and my acting.

Concretely formulated, then, what is the epistemic import of affectivity? With a nod to Sellars, we might say: *In characterizing the affective as part of the structure of knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of an episode or state; we are locating it in the sense-bestowing space of motivations, accounting for our meaning-making in a lived, embodied, and affectively colored world.*

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