



After affects

Description

How do surveillance cameras, and increased monitoring and security procedures *affect* you? Such causes have undoubted *effects* on material circumstances and well-being. Actions **affect** things, and thereby produce **effects**. The verb, *to affect*, results in a noun, an *effect*. But thereâ??s also such a thing as an *affect*, as a noun.

Last Friday I attended a conference in Copenhagen on *Invisibility and Unawareness: Ethico-political Implications of Embeddedness*, where the spotlight was on ubiquitous digital technologies: smartphones, networks, location sensing and the like. According to presenter Susan Kozel,

Studies into affect are burgeoning, not simply in philosophical or theoretical domains but with the realization that the affective lives of citizens are increasingly â??choreographedâ?? by technologies of all sorts.

â??Affectâ?• is a term used in psychology loosely equated to emotion and feeling, but only approximately.



My own contribution to the conference was on the theme of *tuning*, how technologies are involved in the way people *tune* their relationships with one another.

The penny dropped. *Affect* and *tuning* are the same thing. *Attunement* is a term developed in phenomenology to account for the general **mood** of a group or individual. It's a potential, a horizon, an atmosphere that *prepares* you for a particular feeling or emotion. Jonathan Flatley, in his book, *Affective Mapping*, provides a simple example,

Only when I am curious can new objects present themselves to me as interesting.

In this case curiosity is the mood. Without that mood I can't *feel* interested.

Anxiety is also a mood. It's only when I'm anxious (as a mood) that things (shadows, creaking stairs, surveillance cameras, my boss) strike me as fearful.

Attunement is a good word for mood. It's *Stimmung* in Martin Heidegger's writing. *Stimme* is German for voice. Stimmung relates to harmony and tuning. Attunement is the condition in which we are tuned to each other, the environment, the circumstances, the atmosphere of a place, pleasant or unpleasant, for good or ill: picking up on a mood.

So attunement is really the same as affect. It's a pre-emotional, primordial, shared condition that provides the precondition for a certain feeling or emotion. Flatley also relates the condition to William James's understanding of the primacy of bodily engagement in understanding emotion, but that's another story.

To what extent do you participate in surveillance anxiety, the mood of the times, attunement to panoptic stress, affective choreographies of surveillance?

References

- Flatley, Jonathan. 2008. *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gregg, Melissa, and Gregory J. Seigworth (eds). 2010. *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- See [Accidental people](#), [E-motion](#) and [Tuning as a!](#).

Category

1. Body

Tags

1. affect
2. attunement
3. emotion
4. feeling
5. Heidegger
6. mood
7. tuning

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