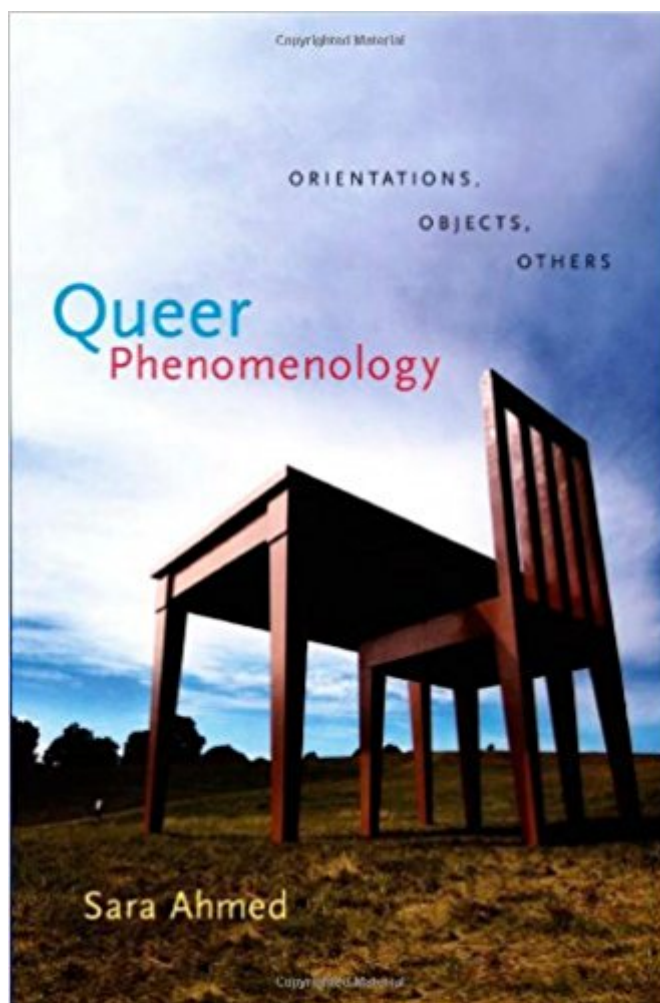


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# Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others



## Synopsis

In this groundbreaking work, Sara Ahmed demonstrates how queer studies can put phenomenology to productive use. Focusing on the "orientation" aspect of "sexual orientation" and the "orient" in "orientalism," Ahmed examines what it means for bodies to be situated in space and time. Bodies take shape as they move through the world directing themselves toward or away from objects and others. Being "orientated" means feeling at home, knowing where one stands, or having certain objects within reach. Orientations affect what is proximate to the body or what can be reached. A queer phenomenology, Ahmed contends, reveals how social relations are arranged spatially, how queerness disrupts and reorders these relations by not following the accepted paths, and how a politics of disorientation puts other objects within reach, those that might, at first glance, seem awry. Ahmed proposes that a queer phenomenology might investigate not only how the concept of orientation is informed by phenomenology but also the orientation of phenomenology itself. Thus she reflects on the significance of the objects that appear and those that do not as signs of orientation in classic phenomenological texts such as Husserl's *Ideas*. In developing a queer model of orientations, she combines readings of phenomenological texts by Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Fanon with insights drawn from queer studies, feminist theory, critical race theory, Marxism, and psychoanalysis. Queer Phenomenology points queer theory in bold new directions.

## Book Information

Paperback: 223 pages

Publisher: Duke University Press Books; First Edition edition (December 4, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0822339145

ISBN-13: 978-0822339144

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.8 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #92,208 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #14 in Books > Gay & Lesbian > Nonfiction > Philosophy #20 in Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Gay & Lesbian Studies #21 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Movements > Phenomenology

## Customer Reviews

“[G]round shaking. The book is disorienting in a good way. It invites the reader to be shaken, disoriented, to question our selves and our position and it evokes the power and necessity of disorientation as a source of movement and challenge. Ahmed doesn’t seem to insist that we deny the positions we currently occupy, or to move on, but to reorient ourselves. Like earthly tremors, queer phenomenology facilitates the formation of lines and fissures along the spaces of our existence, as events that open up new connections, rather than points in lines that bind us to existing structures and spaces in which living obliquely is made uncomfortable, if not impossible.” - Margaret Mayhew, *Cultural Studies Review*

“Ahmed’s most valuable contribution in *Queer Phenomenology* is her reorienting of the language of queer theory. The phenomenological understanding of orientation and its attendant geometric metaphors usefully reframes queer discourse, showing disorientation as a moment not of desperation but of radical possibility, of getting it twisted in a productive and revolutionary way.” - Zachary Lamm, *GLQ*

“In her book, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, Sara Ahmed offers a thorough and at times playful analysis of what it means to be oriented toward objects, ideas, cultures, and sexes. . . . [T]his book is . . . inspiring, stimulating, and a pleasure to read.” - Elizabeth Simon Ruchti, *College Literature*

“Rarely does philosophical writing successfully manage to make its reader embrace the abstraction that comes along with such writing and bridge this abstraction with everyday, lived experience. Sara Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenology* astoundingly does both. . . . *Queer Phenomenology* impressively emerges as a text that is reachable to its readers.” - Yetta Howard, *Women’s Studies*

“The aim of Sara Ahmed’s dense, stimulating and thought-provoking book is to connect sexual orientation with phenomenology in a way that takes the spatiality of sexuality, gender and race seriously, opening up new questions for the cross-disciplinary audience that should read this book. . . . In the acknowledgment, Sara Ahmed notes that her book was a pleasure to write. It is also a pleasure to read. The author’s immense erudition is worn lightly and the book, although dealing with complex ideas is a joy to read as it guides the reader through the argument with great clarity. It will appeal to a wide range of readers and deservedly so.” - Linda McDowell, *Sexualities*

“Finally, a theorist who takes sexual orientation at its word. In this moving meditation on directionality, Sara Ahmed takes phenomenology for a turn through queer theory, postcolonial studies, feminism, critical race theory, geometry, and labor politics. In the world Ahmed encourages us to reinhabit, as bodies come to matter, bodily action materializes space, children inherit proximities rather than attributes, privileged bodies sink into familiarity, and politics is at its best when it involves a measure of

disorientation. Follow her lines of reasoning and you'll never again reach for an explanation, a book, or a lover without wondering how your grasp extended so far in the first place.

•Kath Weston, author of *Gender in Real Time: Power and Transience in a Visual Age*

“In this dazzling new book, Sara Ahmed has begun a much needed dialogue between queer studies and phenomenology. Focusing on the directionality, spatiality, and inclination of desires in time and space, Ahmed explains the straightness of heterosexuality and the digressions made by those queer desires that incline away from the norm, and, in her chapter on racialization, she puts the orient back into orientation. Ahmed's book has no telos, no moral purpose for queer life, but what it brings to the table instead is an original and inspiring meditation on the necessarily disorienting, disconcerting, and disjointed experience of queerness.

•Judith Halberstam, author of *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*

“This is an original and refreshing use of phenomenological theory to address the kinds of questions about orientations and about how bodies and objects become oriented through their interrelations that help link it more directly to political and social questions about gender, sexuality, and race, for example that have tended to be treated as outside or beyond phenomenological frameworks. This extension and development of phenomenology is a major contribution.

•Elizabeth Grosz, author of *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely*

“[G]round shaking. The book is disorienting in a good way. It invites the reader to be shaken, disoriented, to question our selves and our position and it evokes the power and necessity of disorientation as a source of movement and challenge. Ahmed doesn't seem to insist that we deny the positions we currently occupy, or to move on, but to reorient ourselves. Like earthly tremors, queer phenomenology facilitates the formation of lines and fissures along the spaces of our existence, as events that open up new connections, rather than points in lines that bind us to existing structures and spaces in which living obliquely is made uncomfortable, if not impossible.

(Margaret Mayhew Cultural Studies Review)

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(Zachary Lamm GLQ)

“In her book, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, Sara Ahmed offers a thorough and at times playful analysis of what it means to be oriented toward objects, ideas, cultures, and sexes. . . . [T]his book is . . . inspiring, stimulating, and a pleasure to read.

(Elizabeth Simon Ruchti, College

Literature)“Rarely does philosophical writing successfully manage to make its reader embrace the abstraction that comes along with such writing and bridge this abstraction with everyday, lived experience. Sara Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenology* astoundingly does both. . . . *Queer Phenomenology* impressively emerges as a text that is reachable to its readers. (Yetta Howard *Women’s Studies*)“The aim of Sara Ahmed’s dense, stimulating and thought-provoking book is to connect sexual orientation with phenomenology in a way that takes the spatiality of sexuality, gender and race seriously, opening up new questions for the cross-disciplinary audience that should read this book. . . . In the acknowledgment, Sara Ahmed notes that her book was a pleasure to write. It is also a pleasure to read. The author’s immense erudition is worn lightly and the book, although dealing with complex ideas is a joy to read as it guides the reader through the argument with great clarity. It will appeal to a wide range of readers and deservedly so. (Linda McDowell *Sexualities*)

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Sara Ahmed is great writer and in this book she deftly uses phenomenology to analyze how gender, sexuality and racialization become structured through ways bodies are situated and acquire tendencies. She also touches on also how through a reorientation of bodies and tendencies different objects/modes of existence come within reach. For those readers who are already involved with cultural studies or feminist theory, this book will be easy to read on its own, but it can also be enhanced if one has read a bit of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty or at least introductions to their work.

Lucidly written without academic mumbo-jumbo. This is a brilliant and necessary book.

its cool

Sara Ahmed is my hero. This book shaped the way that i view the world. she beautifully lays out

phenomenology, and then takes it to the next level. Her description of 'queering' lines of perception bring into question what we know, and challenge the reader to appreciate and understand discomfort. I think everyone, queer or straight, should read this. By far the best book i read in college

This is a great book. The author's line of thought is very new and queer. She goes from basic everyday examples to the thoughts of great philosopher's, making simpler to understand her thoughts and theirs in contrast.

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