

# "Neo-Phenomenological Sociology: Exploring Embodied Sociality and Pathic Interactions beyond Traditional Phenomenology"

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## ABSTRACT

This study presents an alternative sociological phenomenology rooted in Hermann Schmitz's "New Phenomenology," termed Neo-phenomenological Sociology (NPS). NPS diverges from traditional phenomenological sociology by establishing joint situations as the socio-ontological foundation, emphasizing situational contexts over individual consciousness. It introduces felt-body communication as the core unit of social analysis, shifting focus from cognitive interactions to embodied, affective engagements. The felt body and emotional involvement are highlighted as pre-personal characteristics, underscoring the significance of pre-reflective, embodied experiences in sociality. NPS aims to correct the cognitive and intentional biases of conventional sociology by integrating the pathic aspects of social behavior—those intuitive, spontaneous, and affective elements often overlooked by traditional social sciences. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the subtleties of social interactions, including non-verbal communication and the influence of environments and objects on human behavior. NPS also expands the scope of sociological inquiry to include transhuman interactions, acknowledging the social relevance of animals, objects, and environments. By focusing on these often-ignored dimensions, NPS provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the complexities of social life, offering new insights into the interplay between individuals, their bodies, and their surroundings.

**Key words-** intersubjectivity, phenomenology felt body, felt-bodily communication, Hermann Schmitz, methodological situationism, new phenomenology,

## INTRODUCTION

Phenomenology has played a crucial role in sociology since Alfred Schütz's seminal theoretical contributions. It has significantly influenced fields such as ethnomethodology, the sociology of knowledge, and qualitative social research methodologies. Additionally, phenomenology has impacted theories like Anthony Giddens's structuration theory, Niklas Luhmann's systems theory, and Jürgen Habermas's critical theory. Despite its broad influence, discussions about phenomenological philosophy have been somewhat limited in scope, often revolving around a narrow group of authors and topics. Edmund Husserl's transcendental philosophy has been the predominant reference point for phenomenology-based sociology. This branch of sociology mainly explores the consciousness-related formation of meaningful action, the social construction of reality, intersubjectivity, and understanding others.

However, other phenomenological approaches have not been as prominent in sociological debates. Among these, the German philosopher Hermann Schmitz, who studied at the University of Bonn and served as a professor at the University of Kiel, has recently garnered more attention in German-speaking regions. Schmitz critiques the "old phenomenology" for its psychological-reductionist and objectifying tendencies, which he believes stem from Democritus and Plato and result in a dualistic split between body and soul, and between the inner and outer worlds. Schmitz argues that the primary objective of New Phenomenology is to recover elements of human life experience that traditional phenomenology has overlooked or suppressed.

Since Alfred Schütz's foundational work, phenomenology has been a significant philosophical discipline within sociology, impacting various areas such as ethnomethodology, the sociology of knowledge, and qualitative social

research methods. Phenomenology also informs the theoretical frameworks of scholars like Anthony Giddens, Niklas Luhmann, and Jürgen Habermas. Despite this extensive influence, sociological engagement with phenomenology has been restricted to a limited set of authors and themes. Edmund Husserl's transcendental philosophy remains the main reference for phenomenology-based sociology, focusing on consciousness, meaningful action, the social and communicative construction of reality, intersubjectivity, understanding others, and the lifeworld. Following the Husserl-Schütz tradition, contemporary phenomenological sociology addresses the lifeworld, everyday life, and knowledge.

Other phenomenological thinkers, such as Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, Don Ihde, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, have only marginally influenced sociological discussions compared to Husserl. This is especially true for Hermann Schmitz, who remains relatively unknown internationally despite growing recognition in the German-speaking world. Born on May 16, 1928, Schmitz studied philosophy at the University of Bonn and was a professor at the University of Kiel from 1971 to 1993. His extensive ten-volume work, "System der Philosophie" (1964-1980), spans over 5,000 pages. Since 1980, Schmitz has labeled his approach "New Phenomenology," which has gained traction in German-speaking regions, partly due to the efforts of the "Gesellschaft für Neue Phänomenologie," founded in 1992.

Schmitz's limited international recognition in both philosophy and sociology may stem from his deviation from traditional phenomenological assumptions. He critiques the "psychologistic-reductionist-introjectionist objectification" originating from Democritus and Plato (Schmitz, 2003, p. 7). This form of objectification divides humans into body and soul and separates the world into inner and outer realms, with the soul perceived as an isolated inner world of mind and personal experiences, distinct from the external world. Schmitz contends that Husserl's transcendental idealism further abstracts phenomenology, neglecting crucial aspects of involuntary life experiences. He believes that New Phenomenology, which he views as an empirical science, should rediscover aspects of human experience that traditional phenomenology has overlooked. These aspects include the felt body, embodied communication, emotions as atmospheres, significant situations and rich impressions, surfaceless spaces like weather and sound, and "half-things" such as voice, wind, gravity, pain, and emotions affecting the felt body (Schmitz, 2019a, pp. 55–56).

The similarities and differences between old and new phenomenology are too extensive to explore in detail here, but two key divergences are notable. While Husserl's phenomenology emphasizes the primacy of consciousness and employs a "triadic thing-ontology" (Schmitz, 2002a, p. 15), focusing on "constellations" (Schmitz, 2003, p. 372), Schmitz's phenomenology prioritizes "affective involvement" ("affektives Betroffensein") or the felt body ("Leib") and represents a situation ontology. Neophenomenological Sociology (NPS), which adopts Schmitz's phenomenology, essentially considers itself a sociology based on the felt body and situations.

NPS is still more of a conceptual program than a fully developed theoretical and methodological approach. Beyond the works of Uzarewicz (2011) and Gugutzer (2012), there has been limited research on creating a distinct neophenomenological social theory. In recent decades, sociology has witnessed a renewed interest in embodiment, affect, and intersubjectivity, especially in response to the limitations of purely cognitive or discursive models of social action. Approaches such as symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, and even traditional phenomenological sociology (as pioneered by Alfred Schutz and later extended by scholars like Thomas Luckmann and Harold Garfinkel) have contributed significantly to understanding how meaning is constituted through everyday practices. However, these frameworks often privilege meaning-making processes that are discursive, reflective, and intentional, thereby overlooking the pre-reflective, affective, and bodily dimensions of social experience. In this context, **neo-phenomenology**, as developed by Hermann Schmitz and expanded upon by Thomas Fuchs and Gernot Böhme, offers a provocative alternative by centering the role of *felt-bodily experience*, atmospheres, and *pathic interactions* in social life.

Despite its philosophical richness, neo-phenomenology remains underutilized in sociological research. There is a noticeable **gap in contemporary sociology** concerning how sociality is constituted through affective atmospheres and embodied relationality that operate beneath the threshold of reflective consciousness. While recent developments in affect theory and the sociology of emotions have moved toward acknowledging the visceral and pre-cognitive, these contributions often lack a systematic account of *how* such experiences are bodily constituted and socially meaningful without resorting to representational or symbolic frameworks. **This**

**article addresses that gap** by proposing a neo-phenomenological sociology that foregrounds the role of embodied affectivity and atmospheres in shaping social interactions.

The objective of this study is threefold: **first**, to introduce and contextualize key neo-phenomenological concepts—such as pathic interaction, bodily resonance, and atmospheres—within the broader field of sociological theory; **second**, to demonstrate the empirical utility of these concepts through sociological case illustrations drawn from everyday life, including workplace rituals, family dynamics, healthcare encounters, and educational settings; and **third**, to argue for a methodological shift in sociological inquiry toward recognizing the immediacy and relationality of lived bodily experience. In doing so, this paper not only extends phenomenological sociology beyond its traditional formulations but also aligns with emerging interdisciplinary currents that seek to reconceptualize the body, affect, and intersubjectivity in more situated and dynamic terms.

By situating neo-phenomenological sociology within ongoing debates on embodiment and social interaction, this article invites a rethinking of sociality itself—not as something solely constructed through symbols and discourse, but as something *felt*, lived, and negotiated through shared atmospheres and affective presence. This shift has profound implications for understanding the micro-foundations of social life and for developing new methodological approaches attuned to the bodily and affective textures of the social world.

### **Felt body and affective involvement as the pre-personal apriori of sociality**

In Husserl-based phenomenological sociology, the primary focus of analysis is on consciousness. Reality is constructed through "activities of subjective consciousness" (Luckmann, 2008, p. 34), and sociology must reconstruct this subjective consciousness to understand how historical reality is built through human activity, which is another aspect of consciousness. Thus, the subjective viewpoint of the acting individual serves as the ultimate reference point in socio-scientific analysis rooted in mundane phenomenology (Hitzler, 2005, p. 236; Schütz, 1962a, p. 43).

Neophenomenological Sociology (NPS) shares with mundane phenomenology the emphasis on subjectivity but defines it differently. In neophenomenology, subjectivity does not refer to subjective consciousness but to "subjective states of affairs" ("subjektive Sachverhalte"), particularly the facts of affective involvement (Schmitz, 1990, p. 6). A state of affairs is subjective "if one person at most can say it (using their own name)" (Schmitz, 1990, p. 6). Through affective involvement, one knows with absolute certainty that they are experiencing pain, hunger, fear, or desire. Others who witness or know about these experiences can only refer to them as "objective" or "neutral" (Schmitz, 1990, p. 6). These phenomena are personally meaningful only to the affected individual. Subjective facts are situations that unequivocally concern oneself. Affective involvement bears maximum evidence for subjectiveness. Schmitz argues that for humans, affective involvement is "the most important thing in life" because it highlights "what humans take seriously and for or against what they choose to take action with great heart" (Schmitz, 2003, p. iii). His philosophy aims to rehabilitate subjectivity, with affective involvement being "the focal point of New Phenomenology" (Schmitz, 2003, p. iii).

NPS endorses this view, justifying its normative goal: since phenomena of embodied-affective involvement are crucial in human life, sociology must investigate these phenomena further. Prioritizing affective involvement also broadens the scope of relevant social actors. Affective involvement exists on a pre-personal level among individuals who are not yet or no longer persons due to the inability to self-ascribe, such as infants or dementia patients (and possibly coma patients). It also exists on a pre-human level in higher animals. Believing affective involvement to be an apriori of sociality, NPS considers all these beings as (potential) social actors.

An apriori of sociality means that affective involvement is the condition for sociality. Without felt bodies, merely lifeless bodies exist, making sociality impossible. Sociality requires at least one felt body. The felt body is the apriori of sociality because affective involvement always refers to something or someone else: a felt-bodily ego is affected by an alter ego, which may not be a felt-bodily entity or another human. The felt body in terms of affective involvement is a relational category where the self is associated with other entities (alien bodies, possibly nonhuman, and also immaterial things). Felt-bodily communication, discussed in section 3, is the primary unit of sociality.

Affective involvement is crucial for NPS as both the *apriori* of sociality and a key action-theoretical category. According to Jürgen Hasse, this category can be called "patheur," meaning "an individual that follows vital and intuitive impulses rather than a rationally and methodically acting individual" (Hasse, 2010, p. 70). This translates into action-theoretical terms as an anti-rationalist, anti-teleological concept of action. It highlights that much social behavior is felt-bodily motivated and physically executed beyond deliberate control, representing embodied action (Gugutzer, 2012, pp. 52–58).

A social patheur's actions are greatly influenced by the surrounding space and atmosphere. Unlike a driver using a street to reach a destination, a patheur allows an atmosphere to shape his personal situation and actions (Hasse, 2010, p. 70). The social patheur exists within a spatially extended, atmospherically charged situation that impacts both his actions and the situation itself. For sociological action theory, focusing on the social patheur highlights the importance of space and atmosphere, aspects usually overlooked in action theories.

The concept of the social patheur also challenges the dominant activist notion of action in sociological action theory (Joas, 1996). Social action is not just meaningful, deliberate-intentional behavior (Castellani, 2013), but also something passively endured. Phenomenological-based action theory recognizes this by distinguishing "between the endurance of something imposed and the causation of something available" (Luckmann, 1992, p. 28). However, due to its reliance on Husserl's philosophy of consciousness, it has failed to phenomenologically substantiate the behavioral dimension of endurance and to emphasize passive-pathic embodied action in its action theory. NPS can fill this theoretical gap by focusing on the embodied experiences ("Widerfahrnisse") in life, making the surprising, unexpected, novel, and partially controllable elements of social situations a subject of discussion.

Certain implications for NPS-based research programs arise from this discussion. Neophenomenological-sociological studies typically focus on empirical subjects explicitly dealing with affective involvement. This can include love rituals between couples, dispute cultures in companies, or the societal consequences of collective protests by angry citizens—sociologically relevant phenomena of affective involvement exist at micro-, meso-, and macro-social levels. NPS also theoretically focuses on the actions and interactions of patheurs. Even in topics not directly related to the felt body and emotions, NPS examines the social relevance of passive-pathic embodied experiences. Overall, both actor and patheur are equally important in NPS. **Felt-Bodily Communication: The Fundamental Form of Sociality**

While Neophenomenological Sociology (NPS) considers embodied-affective involvement as the foundational element of sociality, it doesn't inherently achieve sociality. Basic human experiences such as hunger, thirst, fear, or pain impact the individual directly without necessitating another individual's presence. The transition from the individual to the collective level is facilitated by felt-bodily communication, a concept based on the relational nature of affective involvement (Schmitz, 1978, 2011; Griffero, 2017; Julmi, 2018). In NPS, if the patheur represents the core subject, then felt-bodily communication embodies the primordial concept of sociality.

The concept of felt-bodily communication is grounded in the spatial-dynamic structure of the felt body (Schmitz, 2011). Schmitz identifies the dual tendencies of "contraction" (Enge) and "expansion" (Weite) as fundamental categories of the felt body: this dynamic fluctuates between maximum contraction (such as in fear or hunger) and maximum expansion (such as in sleep or after an orgasm) (Schmitz, 1965). Human existence always oscillates between these extremes, with these contractions and expansions forming a dynamic interplay during consciousness.

This internal dialogue between contraction and expansion becomes sociologically relevant when it transforms into a trans-subjective dialogue. This transformation happens when an embodied subject is affected by an external entity in a way that demands a reaction, leading to felt-bodily communication. Such communication occurs when someone is deeply affected by something external, compelling them to react and orient their behavior based on their suffering and response (Schmitz, 1978).

Felt-bodily communication, or "encorporation" (Einleibung), is not limited to interactions between living beings. A person can also be profoundly influenced by non-human elements like a movie or a beautiful landscape. These are instances of "one-sided encorporation," where fascination or suggestion arises from non-human sources. Conversely, "mutual encorporation" happens when interacting participants affect each other, impacting their



respective actions. Schmitz categorizes mutual encorporation into "antagonistic" and "solidary" forms, exemplified by hostile glances or cooperative activities like choir singing or rowing (Schmitz, 1990, 2011).

These forms of encorporation rely on mediating elements. Encorporation is enabled through felt-bodily communication media, specifically "bridging qualities" that can be felt and perceived during interactions. Schmitz highlights "suggestions of motion" (e.g., rhythm) and "synaesthetic characters" (qualities that bridge sensory modalities) as crucial bridges for felt-bodily communication (Schmitz, 2005). Elements like air temperature or voice tone can significantly influence behavior and social interactions.

Felt-bodily communication is sociologically significant because it establishes the foundation for social relationships between humans and non-human entities and addresses the problem of intersubjectivity. This issue concerns how individuals enter social relationships and recognize each other. Schütz addressed it through the "general thesis of the reciprocity of perspectives" and structural similarities in consciousness processes (Schütz, 1967). He posited that intersubjectivity is accessible in the lifeworld through mundane interactions, rather than through transcendental means (Schütz, 1962b).

However, NPS critiques both Husserl's and Schütz's approaches for not fully addressing the pathic, perceptibly-perceiving felt body. They continued the tradition of dualistic views separating the physical body and the consciousness. Schmitz argues that mutual encorporation, characterized by mutual affective involvement, is the solution to the problem of intersubjectivity (Schmitz, 2003). This view was initially pointed out by Sartre, who emphasized that being the target of another's glance verifies the existence of the other (Sartre, 1993). However, Schmitz critiques Sartre for overlooking the mutuality of this interaction. According to Schmitz, mutual encorporation, where one feels affected by another's embodied emotions, solves the problem of intersubjectivity (Schmitz, 2011).

Thus, from an NPS perspective, intersubjectivity is achieved through the mutual affective involvement of ego and alter ego, where each feels directly impacted by the other's physical or felt body. This mutual encorporation is the fundamental criterion for recognizing others and oneself within social contexts (Schmitz, 2003, 2011). Consequently, NPS emphasizes felt-bodily intersubjectivity over mundane intersubjectivity.

NPS-based research highlights theoretical contributions to understanding sociality's constitution and construction. It views felt-bodily communication as the smallest analytical unit of sociality, focusing on non-rational, non-lingual coordination and communication processes at the micro-social level. Therefore, larger social phenomena are analyzed through their micro-social components. NPS extends the boundaries of social actors to include those who cannot fully communicate or are not fully conscious, such as infants, dementia patients, coma patients, as well as animals, objects, and atmospheres.

### **Joint Situations as the Socio-Ontological Foundation and Manifestation of Sociality**

This study has previously concentrated on the felt-body-based foundations of Neophenomenological Sociology (NPS). However, NPS extends beyond being a mere sociology of the felt body, as it encompasses broader sociological themes such as values, norms, roles, power, structures, institutions, organizations, and society at large. The concept that integrates these themes within NPS is found in Schmitz's theory of situations, particularly the notion of "joint situations" derived from the ontological term "situation."

### **Schmitz's Situation Theory**

In Schmitz's perspective, a situation is an ontological concept foundational to human experience, action, expectation, imagination, desire, or will, characterized by wholeness, integrating meaningfulness, and internal diffuseness. A university lecture exemplifies a situation, coherently structured by thematic, social, local, and temporal elements, with intertwined elements such as rules, hopes, and potential problems contributing to its meaningfulness.

Schmitz categorizes situations using four bipolar dimensions:

1. Impressive vs. Segmented Situations: Impressive situations are perceived holistically in a single moment (e.g., first impressions), while segmented situations unfold over time (e.g., social class).
2. Current vs. State-like Situations: Current situations happen in the present (e.g., conversations), while state-like situations are continuous and enduring (e.g., biographies).
3. Personal vs. Joint Situations: Personal situations are tied to an individual's character and felt-bodily disposition, while joint situations embed personal situations and can be further divided into implanting (e.g., family) and inclusive (e.g., peer groups) situations.

### Importance of Situation Theory in Sociology

Schmitz's theory helps bridge the gap between individual and society, merging action theory and structure theory into a methodological situationism. This approach analyzes joint situations in relation to embedded personal situations, integrating micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of social analysis, reflecting humans' involvement in multiple interconnected situations.

### Emergence, Stabilization, and Transformation of Joint Situations

Felt-bodily communication, especially antagonistic mutual encorporation, is key to the emergence of joint situations. These situations, once repeated and habituated, can transform into state-like joint situations, establishing institutions. Solidary mutual encorporation, though less common, plays a crucial role in social integration (e.g., collective singing creating a shared emotional experience).

Institutions and social order gain stability through their embedding in personal felt-bodily dispositions. However, social change often stems from dissatisfaction with current situations, driven by individuals (pathic) who experience negative bodily involvement, leading to transformative actions across all social levels.

### Embodied Sociality in Practice: Illustrative Cases from Everyday Life

To highlight the applicability of neo-phenomenological sociology, it is crucial to examine how embodied sociality and pathic interactions manifest in everyday social contexts. Traditional phenomenology has long emphasized the first-person structure of experience, but neo-phenomenology extends this by foregrounding the pre-reflective, bodily felt dimensions of social life—what Hermann Schmitz refers to as “felt-bodily” (Leibliche) resonance (Schmitz, 2011). This shift opens up new avenues for sociological inquiry into how atmospheres and affective intensities circulate within institutions, relationships, and collective practices.

In workplace environments, for example, weekly staff meetings often generate atmospheres that influence employee behavior beyond rational deliberation. Employees may enter the room and instantly sense a mood of tension or urgency—experienced not through explicit communication but through bodily cues: nervous glances, stiff postures, or subdued vocal tones. These affective climates shape conduct through what Schmitz (2014) calls pathic modalities—bodily states of being affected that precede conscious interpretation. The shared mood is not reducible to any single individual's expression; rather, it circulates as a collective, spatial atmosphere that is embodied and relational (Waldenfels, 2007).

Similarly, family dynamics reveal how pathic communication often operates beneath the level of language. A teenager's act of slamming a door during a heated exchange can be understood not simply as an outburst but as a pre-reflective, bodily articulation of emotional strain. Within a neo-phenomenological framework, this gesture is more than symbolic; it becomes an expressive act of bodily resonance that reorganizes the atmosphere of the household, immediately affecting how other family members feel and respond. Such pathic expressions elude conventional discursive analysis, yet they are central to the affective rhythms of familial life.

In the healthcare domain, neo-phenomenology helps uncover the subtle interplay of bodily presence and affect in caregiving encounters. A nurse comforting a patient through sustained eye contact, a reassuring hand on the

shoulder, or simply through calm bodily presence, demonstrates how care is often communicated through inter-affective resonance rather than verbal reassurance (Fuchs, 2016). These forms of interaction involve what neo-phenomenology describes as “bodily attunement,” where emotional understanding and trust are mediated through the felt body.

Education settings provide yet another fertile ground for exploring embodied sociality. In classrooms, students often experience an “atmosphere of authority” that influences their bodily comportment. Without any overt directive, a teacher’s mere presence may elicit upright posture, reduced speech, and lowered gaze among students. These behaviors reflect a pathic discipline—an embodied responsiveness to authority that is shaped not by coercion or rule enforcement but by the diffuse, atmospheric qualities of the learning environment.

Across these varied contexts—workplaces, families, healthcare, and education—neo-phenomenological sociology provides a rich framework for understanding how sociality is not only constructed through discourse or norms but also lived and negotiated through bodily affect, atmospheres, and tacit resonance. Such an approach invites a rethinking of social theory by emphasizing the immediacy and relationality of felt experience as a constitutive dimension of the social world.

## METHODOLOGICAL SITUATIONISM

NPS adopts methodological situationism, focusing on joint situations as the core level of analysis and examining the states of affairs, programmatic content, and problems significant in these situations. This approach avoids the limitations of traditional situationism by acknowledging current, impressive, state-like, and segmented situations, and recognizing non-human entities as integral participants.

NPS aligns with Erving Goffman's focus on situations over individuals, emphasizing the reconstruction of joint situations to understand their emergence, processes, and structures, particularly through problematic states of affairs. This method seeks to enhance the comprehension of how sociality is shaped and transformed by these joint situations.

### Summary

This paper aimed to outline Neophenomenological Sociology (NPS) as an alternative to the phenomenological sociology rooted in Husserl and Schütz, highlighting their differences without asserting the superiority of NPS. Key distinctions are summarized in Table 1, contrasting traditional phenomenological sociology with NPS across various criteria such as foundational authors, philosophical approaches, and core concepts.

### Key Differences Between 'Old' and New Phenomenological Sociology

Comparison Criteria	‘Old’ Phenomenological Sociology	New Phenomenological Sociology (NPS)
Main Philosophical Author	Edmund Husserl	Hermann Schmitz
Kind of Phenomenology	Transcendental phenomenology	Realist (empirical) phenomenology
Social Apriori	Consciousness	Felt body (affective involvement)
Basic Concept of Subject	Actor (intentional-reflexive actions)	Patheur (embodied, pre-reflexive actions)
Basic Concept of Sociality	Intersubjectivity	Felt-bodily communication
Ontology	Thing ontology (constellationism)	Situational ontology
Socio-ontological Foundation	Lifeworld	Lifeworld

Methodology	Methodological individualism	Joint situations
Sociology	Human sociology	Methodological situationism

Source- J Theory Soc Behav. 2020;50:184–202.

## Theoretical and Conceptual Peculiarities of NPS

**1. Felt-Bodily Foundation:** NPS challenges the "quasi-mentalistic narrow-mindedness" of traditional sociology by adding a felt-bodily dimension to sociological concepts. This redefines meaning, understanding, communication, and action to include felt-bodily aspects, countering the Cartesian conception of humans as purely rational and intentional beings.

**2. Focus on Pathic Involvement:** NPS shifts attention from intentional actions to pathic involvement, emphasizing the role of pre-reflexive, embodied interactions in social contexts. This perspective prioritizes unexpected, spontaneous social behaviors over deliberate social order and control.

**3. Analytical Grip on Pre-Reflexive Social Processes:** The concept of felt-bodily communication allows NPS to analyze social processes that occur without intentional meaning-positing, such as intuitive and improvisational interactions. This includes non-symbolic means of social behavior, like gestures and atmospheres.

**4. Transhuman Sociology:** NPS extends the scope of social actors beyond humans to include animals, objects, and even atmospheres, recognizing their impact on social behavior. This aligns with Latour's notion that any entity that modifies a state of affairs is an actor, challenging the exclusion of non-intentional entities from sociological consideration.

## Methodological Situationism

NPS employs "methodological situationism," focusing on joint situations as the primary unit of analysis, which includes both felt-bodily communication and the interplay of personal and joint situations. This approach avoids the limitations of traditional situationism or contextualism by considering both current and state-like situations, as well as the influence of non-human entities.

## Expanding NPS

To further develop NPS, future research should integrate overlooked aspects such as the material body, the active and reflexive dimensions of social action, and social institutions and organizations. These additions will enhance the theoretical and empirical robustness of NPS, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena.

## CONCLUSION

### Reorienting Sociological Inquiry through Neo-phenomenological Lenses

This study has sought to position *Neo-phenomenological Sociology* (NPS) as a critical and timely extension of phenomenological thought, emphasizing the centrality of embodied sociality and pathic interactions in the constitution of social experience. In contrast to traditional phenomenological sociology, which largely centers on reflective consciousness and symbolic interaction, NPS reorients attention toward pre-reflective, affective, and bodily dimensions of lived experience—what Hermann Schmitz has termed *felt-bodily resonance*. The theoretical core of NPS—articulated through concepts such as *patheur*, *encorporation*, and *atmospheres*—offers a profound reconceptualization of intersubjectivity as a fundamentally affective and corporeal phenomenon.

To advance this agenda, the present work has demonstrated how felt-bodily interactions unfold in a range of everyday sociological contexts: in the quiet tensions of a workplace meeting, the emotionally charged dynamics of a family dispute, the tacit comfort of caregiver-patient relations, and the disciplining atmospheres of educational settings. These examples underscore the analytical power of NPS in revealing how social life is



organized through embodied presence and affective attunement, rather than solely through language, norms, or discursive interpretation.

Looking forward, several promising avenues for empirical application and methodological development emerge. In organizational studies, NPS can illuminate how affective atmospheres shape employee performance, cohesion, and burnout in ways that often elude quantitative metrics. In healthcare sociology, neo-phenomenological tools may provide insight into the relational and therapeutic dimensions of care, moving beyond diagnostic models to consider how trust, reassurance, and empathy are transmitted through bodily presence. In education, attention to felt-bodily discipline can enrich understandings of authority, participation, and classroom dynamics beyond behaviorist or symbolic approaches. Across these domains, NPS invites sociologists to develop new modes of observation and analysis attuned to the pathic, non-verbal undercurrents of social life.

Methodologically, future research should explore how neo-phenomenological concepts can be operationalized through qualitative techniques such as ethnography, sensory ethnography, video interaction analysis, and phenomenologically informed interviews. These approaches may be particularly effective in capturing the spatial, gestural, and affective elements that constitute felt-bodily sociality. Interdisciplinary collaboration—with scholars in psychology, anthropology, education, health studies, and design—may further expand the empirical scope and applicability of NPS.

Finally, for neo-phenomenological sociology to gain wider traction and accessibility, especially among interdisciplinary audiences, greater effort should be made to clarify and translate its conceptual vocabulary. Terms such as *pathic*, *patheur*, *encorporation*, and *atmosphere*—though theoretically nuanced—may be unfamiliar or opaque to readers without prior grounding in phenomenological philosophy. To this end, future publications should include simplified explanations, illustrative case examples, and glossaries that bridge theoretical depth with empirical clarity.

In sum, Neo-phenomenological Sociology offers a compelling alternative to both cognitivist and constructivist paradigms in the social sciences. By foregrounding the immediacy of felt-bodily experience and the atmospheric textures of interaction, it opens new conceptual and methodological pathways for understanding how social reality is lived, shared, and constituted in the flesh. As contemporary societies grapple with increasingly complex forms of embodiment—through virtual environments, algorithmic governance, and pandemic biopolitics—neo-phenomenological perspectives will be indispensable in rethinking what it means to be a social being in an affectively saturated world.

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