

The Atmospheric Turn in Phenomenology

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This paper aims at that phenomenological revision known as the “New Phenomenology” introduced in the philosophical landscape by the German philosopher Hermann Schmitz. According to this new philosophical paradigm, emotions and feelings are “atmospheres” poured out spatially that move the felt body. Countering the psychologist, reductionist, and introjectionist objectification of feelings and emotions, the “New Phenomenology” assumes that the idea of the soul, meant as a private inner sphere containing its entire experience, is mistaken. This paper, then, attempts to investigate the extent to which phenomenological revision serves to “approximate” the spontaneous life experience, that is, what really happens to people in a felt matter without them having intentionally constructed it.

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1. A new phenomenological paradigm

According to the new phenomenological paradigm, inaugurated by the German philosopher Hermann Schmitz¹, emotions and feelings are ‘atmospheres’ poured out spatially that move the ‘felt’ (not the material) body. This change in the conception of inner life replaces the dominant trend in human self-interpretation which permeated for a long time the European intellectual tradition since Democritus and Plato. What does this trend properly consist of? It is rooted in the idea that man consists of a material body and a soul. This way of seeing things draws upon human understanding of the self and the world introduced in Greece in the second half of the 5th century B.C. We can term it, using Schmitz’s words, the ‘psychologic–reductionist–introjectionist’ objectification characterizing it as follows: the domain of experience is ‘dissected’ by ascribing to each conscious subject a private inner sphere — soul, *Geist*, consciousness is the same — containing its entire experience. Thanks to the introduction of the philosophical term ‘soul’, the external realm outside the souls is ground down to features of a few kinds, *res extensae* that

¹ Hermann Schmitz, *Kurze Einführung in die Neue Phänomenologie* (2014^a); Eng. trans. by Tonino Griffero, *New Phenomenology. A Brief Introduction*, Mimesis, Milano 2019.