

ATMOSPHERES: AESTHETICS OF EMOTIONAL SPACES

For Alessandra

For suggestions and encouragements that have contributed to the making of this book I am grateful to my friends and colleagues
Alessandro Ferrara and (in memoriam) Massimo Rosati

Atmospheres: Aesthetics of Emotional Spaces

TONINO GRIFFERO University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy

TRANSLATION BY SARAH DE SANCTIS



First published 2010 by Ashgate Publishing

Published 2016 by Routledge 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN 711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Copyright © 2010, Gius. Laterza & Figli, All rights reserved Published by arrangement with Marco Vigevani Agenzia Letteraria

This is a translation into English of *Atmosferologia: Estetica degli spazi emozionali*, translated by Sarah de Sanctis. This edition © 2014.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Tonino Griffero has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the author of this work.

Notice:

Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

The Library of Congress has cataloged the printed edition as follows:

Griffero, Tonino.

Atmospheres: aesthetics of emotional spaces / by Tonino Griffero.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4724-2172-2 (hardback) -- ISBN 978-1-4724-2173-9 (ebook) -- ISBN 978-1-

4724-2174-6 (epub) 1. Space. 2. Aesthetics, Modern. 3. Emotions (Philosophy) I. Title.

BH301.S65G75 2014

111'.85--dc23

2013044893

ISBN 9781472421722 (hbk) ISBN 9781315568287 (ebk)

Contents

Intro	oduction: Not to Leave Vagueness (but to Stay in it in the Right Way)	1
1	Atmospheric Perception	9
	1.1 Atmospheric Segmentation?	9
	1.2 Perceiving Atmospheres	11
	1.3 How One Feels Here and Now in the Felt-Body	23
	1.4 The First Impression	29
	1.5 Atmospheres as Situational Constraints	31
	1.6 Lived (Predimensional) Spaces	36
	1.7 'Affordances' and Imagine-Motor Reactions	47
2	History of the Concept of Atmosphere	55
	2.1 The Climatic Paradigm	55
	2.2 Atmosphere and Landscape	60
	2.3 Orosensory Atmosphere (and the Case of Haptics)	63
	2.4 that 'Creates an Atmosphere'	69
	2.5 The Numinous and the 'Genius Loci'	73
	2.6 'Stimmung', 'Ambiance', Aura	75
	2.7 From 'Affordances' to Emotional Design	79
	2.8 And Art? From the Beautiful to the Atmospheric	82
	2.9 Urban Seductions	87
	2.10 The Magic of Dwelling	93
	2.11 Ecstasy of Materials	96
3	Atmospherology	101
	3.1 History of a 'Sin': Introjection and Projection	101
	3.2 Atmospheres: Not Metaphors but Quasi-things	108
	3.3 Sinaesthesias	113
	3.4 'All Out': Atmospheric Ontology	119
	3.5 Principles of a Phenomenology of Atmospheres	129

Atmospheres:	Aesthetics	of Emotio	nal Spaces
--------------	------------	-----------	------------

vi

Index

Conclusion	143
Bibliography	151

171

Introduction Not to Leave Vagueness (but to Stay in it in the Right Way)

'If no one asks me, I know; If I want to explain it to an interrogator, I do not know.' The well-known *captatio* with which Augustine introduces the enigma of time certainly holds true for atmosphere as well. That is, for a state that is hardly defined not because it is rare and unusual but, on the contrary, because it is as omnipresent – even though at times unnoticed – as the emotive situation. Just as 'fundamentally there is no state of life of man that is not already sentimentally tuned in some way' (Bollnow 1941: 54), there is probably no situation that is totally deprived of an atmospheric charge. Despite its undoubted intermittence, the atmosphere (*atmos* = exhalation or vapour, *sphaire* = sphere or globe) is therefore something we all know, even outside of the nonetheless relevant meteorological field (see *infra* 2.1). It is something in which, to paraphrase Merleau-Ponty, 'there is sense', a *logos in statu nascendi* that can even be geographically searched for – perhaps à *la* Nietzsche, in whose pathological quest for favourable climates it is hard not to recognise an improvised atmospheric diet.

In fact, not only do we speak of atmospheres continuously, we are also not surprised by being able to describe them and verify their influence on actions, sometimes even on events of historical significance. We resort to them to explain certain causal interactions and to comprehend emphatic tunings that would otherwise be incomprehensible, or more generally all those effects that, being out of proportion with respect to their causes, used to be attributed by pre-modern knowledge to a mysterious action *in distans*. We say that 'there is something in the air' or that 'there is something brewing', or that we feel, who knows why, like

¹ Soentgen (1998: 72) is therefore mistaken when defining them 'anti-Faustian sentiments'.

^{2 &#}x27;It is absolutely certain that an important element of comprehension is given by the coherence between atmospheric sensibility and atmospheric irradiation.' (Tellenbach 1968: 62 ff.)

'a fish out of water' or 'at home'. It is well-known that the atmosphere at lunch is different from that at dinner, that old furniture has more atmosphere than modern,³ that even appetite can be stimulated by an atmosphere of warmth and trust, that sometimes a witticism is enough to change for better an initial atmosphere of diffidence, that to paint the walls means to essentially change the atmosphere of the room, that to have a coffee together creates an atmosphere of intimacy and sociality, that 'a drink seems to taste better in a dark and dimly lit bar' (Dichter 1964: 360). And also – choosing examples (almost) at random – that a small pill emanates an atmosphere of greater effectiveness, that to take off the gloves before shaking hands suggests an atmosphere of intimacy, that certain objects age well acquiring a seductive patina that makes collectors happy, that as soon as 'a shadow is thrown on our environment, our own mood changes correspondingly, as it were by reflection; we feel cold, and our own mind seems to have darkened' (Köhler 1938: 12). Furthermore, it is obvious that 'a particular piece of music can change the atmosphere in a room, [...] a particular article of clothing can change the impression a person makes, [...] a certain architecture can modify the expression of a city' (Seel 2005: 92), that one can tell immediately whether a film is French or American by the overall atmosphere of it. Is the aroma that, for Lévi-Strauss, assaults whoever gets to the new world truly a chemically peculiar smell or is it rather an unforgettable atmosphere symbolically condensed in a perfume? Well, in these and in countless other cases, we do indeed count on atmosphere – even though we cannot define it. Even when, feeling ill at ease or having nothing to say, we talk about the weather, we are probably discussing optical-climatic conditions that, exercising an effect on the felt body,4 can be well defined as atmospheric.

Yet, despite this undoubted familiarity with atmosphere and with the fact that it can also be in contrast with cognitively verifiable data, the question 'what is an atmosphere?' is still – perhaps necessarily, given the reifying presupposition of the question? – not answered satisfactorily. Even knowing that the attempt at

³ It has a 'moral theatricality' and a 'warmth' that renders it 'a realm of even greater privacy: they serve less as possessions than as symbolic intercessors.' (Baudrillard 2005: 16, 85)

⁴ I borrow here the classical phenomenological distinction between felt-body (*Leib*) and mere, physical body (*Körper*). My use of the adjective 'corporeal' shall be understood as referring to the felt-body.

Introduction 3

conceptualising 'floating and hardly graspable experiences' (Geiger 1911a: 156) risks 'inadvertently modelling experiences on concepts' (ibid), I will here accept the challenge, preferring overall an inevitably reductive definition of the variety of the manifestations of atmosphere⁵ to the thesis according to which everything is atmospheric (and, consequently, nothing is in the proper sense). Of course, just like emotions, atmospheres too are 'curious situations that lose meaning when one tries to describe them: one has to be in them to understand them' (Galati 2002: 84). Nor does the ambiguity of the linguistic usage seem casual: 'atmosphere' can be either a neutrally descriptive expression (the atmosphere can be harmonious or suspicious), or implicitly (and positively) axiological, in the sense that by exclaiming 'what an atmosphere!' we usually express ipso facto a favourable condition.⁶ It is obvious that this ambiguity is conditioned by the current praxis in the regional ontology in question, as emerges from the fact that when we prefer the atmosphere to the plot of a film we are probably praising its formal-authorial intensity, while when we say of a political summit that it produced a cordial atmosphere we are probably stating its failure (unless, obviously, the expectations were totally pessimistic). Atmosphere can therefore, paradoxically, be everything and nothing, a bit like 'air': it is everything or almost so when it increases the quality of life, when some enterprise succeeds thanks to the atmosphere of trust⁷ or resilience (resistance, elasticity, vitality and good mood) as an efficacious barrier against negative situations,8 yet it is almost nothing when it only indicates the superficial occultation of conflicts.

One cannot exclude that it is for this very semantic plasticity that the concept of atmosphere, although counting on a metaphorical use of the term ever since the Eighteenth century, has recently boomed,⁹ especially in the psychological, aesthetological and (neo)phenomenological area.¹⁰ First of all, that is, in all the research areas that, paying more attention to the 'veil' or the 'cloud' occulting the

⁵ Especially if we consider atmospheres as irreducible to concepts just as much as Kantian 'aesthetic ideas' (Franzini 2006).

⁶ In fact, a famous advertising slogan of the past ('the brandy that creates an atmosphere') felt no need to further specify the nature of that atmosphere.

⁷ That often 'is mistaken for a man' (Daudet 1928: 198).

⁸ Graf (2006).

⁹ Soentgen (1998: 72–73) even speaks of an atmospheric turn.

¹⁰ For a first approach to this, see Tellenbach (1968); Schmitz (1964 on., 1969, 1998), Böhme (1985, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2006a, 2006b), on which Battisti (2006), Hauskeller (1995, 1998, 1999, 2002), Hasse (2002a, 2002b, 2005, 2006, 2008a, 2008b).

'edge' of the thing itself (Schapp 1976: 13 ff.) than to strictly functional parameters, rejoice in the meticulous and occasionally exhausting description of phenomenical *nuances*. And obviously it flourished also in the 'aesthetic work', ¹¹ meaning by this not only the production of atmospheres, but also their pertinent reception within the so-called widespread aesthetisation. Finally, the concept of atmosphere prospered also in those areas where demonstration gives way to persuasion and cognitively irreducible *qualia*, such as economic choices, decisional processes and even inferential psychology. In fact, even the greater 'felt' persuasiveness of some logically invalid syllogisms – like the one that from two particular and affirmative premises (some A are B, some B are C), atmospherically draws an erroneous particular and affirmative conclusion (some A are C)¹² – could be attributed to an 'atmosphere effect'.

Being philosophically interesting not *despite* but *precisely because of* this vagueness, atmosphere does not yet coincide with an exclusively subjective *nuance*. Whoever proclaims (with Conrad's Kurtz) 'the horror, the horror!', or discusses the even corporeal atmosphere (for instance, of irritability¹³) of an entire age, is obviously intending to refer to extra-subjective atmospheres. It is true that we say 'I am sad' and not 'I feel sadness around me', but only because the extreme proximity of that atmosphere and the introjectionist prejudice privileging the possessive sense of the personal pronoun,¹⁴ both impede the external location of sadness.

Subjects exist only through subjective facts, while subjectivity-for-someone does not already presuppose this someone as a subject. Rather, at its root, in my being affectively involved, subjectivity-for-me is such that the word 'me' is to

¹¹ Which, according to Böhme (1995: 24–25; 2001: 22; 2006b: 8), includes not only art, but also design, cosmetics, advertising, scenography, urban design, etc.

^{12 &#}x27;The premises create a mood, a sort of humoral vein, which in turn creates the atmosphere of reasoning. The positive and universal vein satisfies us the most and invites us to persuasion the most [...] Instead, a syllogism based on negations and partial systems [...] creates an atmosphere that is less persuasive for us' (Piattelli Palmarini 1995: 76–77). On the controversial 'atmosphere effect' see Woodsworth-Sells (1935), Sells (1936), Chapman-Chapman (1959), Begg-Denny (1969), Evans *et al.* (1993: 235–241).

¹³ See Lethen (2005) on the atmosphere of 'irritability' of the third decade of the twentieth century.

^{14 &#}x27;My sadness', in fact, implies 'not that I possess it, hold it or perform it', but only that 'it hits me, regards me, touches me in the flesh.' (Schmitz 2003: 181)

Introduction 5

be understood not so much as a pronoun but rather an adverb (like 'here' and 'now'), which does not nominate an object but characterises a milieu – just as with the word 'here' we do not refer to an object ('the here') but to what is here, in the milieu of maximum proximity. (Schmitz 1994: 15)

At the centre of our (aesthetic and phenomenological) interest there is, therefore, atmosphere – and here is a first, approximate, definition – as a qualitative-sentimental *prius*, spatially poured out, of our sensible encounter with the world. Something that is 'chronologically at the start and objectively at the peak of the hierarchy', as emerges from the fact that 'the sensibility to the differences in way-of-being or "atmosphere" existing between two colours is normally greater than the sensibility for the corresponding differences between pure chromatic qualities' (Metzger 1941: 86). Perceiving an atmosphere, therefore, means grasping a feeling in the surrounding space, definitively the most important thing for men, is implied by any subsequent clarification, both sensible and cognitive. It means being gripped by a *something-more*, and it is precisely 'this something-more, exceeding real factuality and which nonetheless we feel with and in it, that we can call "atmospheric" (Tellenbach 1968: 47), seeing in it an excess with respect to the place of the place of

^{15 &#}x27;Feelings are the most important thing in life, because only they bring power and delicacy, brightness and opacity into the world; the only thing that, generally, makes something important to men.' (Schmitz 1969: xii)

^{16 &#}x27;We must recognize the indeterminate as a positive phenomenon. It is in this atmosphere that quality arises'. 'But in reality all things are concretions of a setting, and any explicit perception of a thing survives in a virtue of a previous communication with a certain atmosphere', like a chromatic one, for instance. And if they are objects, every one of them 'is moulded to the human action which it serves. Each one spreads round in an atmosphere of humanity', that is more or less determined. (Merleau-Ponty 2005: 7, 374, 405)

^{17 &#}x27;An occupied space creates an atmosphere. Atmosphere is always what the individual objects that occupy places are not, the other side of their form, what perishes along with them. This explains the "invulnerability" of atmosphere, along with its dependency on a given occupied space. Atmosphere is a kind of excess effect caused by the difference between places. It cannot be analyzed by describing places, nor is it reducible to places. It comes into being each time an object occupies a place and creates an ambiance that is neither identical to the object nor able to resist without it. Atmosphere makes visible both the unity of the difference that constitutes space and the invisibility of space as a medium for the creation of forms. But it is not the same as space, which, as a medium, can never become visible.'(Luhmann 2000: 112)

'difference', 18 a 'resonance' of the felt space, filled by atmosphere not as 'a material object which fills another by espousing the form that the other imposes' (Minkowski 1936: 86) but rather as a vibration (not necessarily auditory) in which the perceived and the perceiver meet and even merge isomorphically and predualistically. It is a something-more, a *je-ne-sais-quoi* perceived by the felt-body in a given space, but never fully attributable to the objectual set of that space – hence the resort to very precise, although oxymoric, formulations, like in the case of the 'misty transparency' attributed by Goethe to the Mediterranean landscape. 19 A spatialised feeling. 20 a something-more in an affective and corporeal sense, rather than in an abstractly semantic sense: 'in all the areas of sense, atmosphere, in the perceived object, is what is not object but meaning. The way in which the world is for us, namely what kind of relation we have with the world in every single moment and how we feel in it, is something we experience not objectively but atmospherically' (Hauskeller 1995: 101). A something-more that, finally, escapes 'analytical' and therefore 'immobilising' perception, because 'science reduces all it touches to immobility, it transforms it into still life. While around us the world resonates with a thousand melodies, exhales a thousand perfumes, is animated by a thousand movements, that make our being vibrate and palpitate. And we take part in this life, so intense, impalpable and indefinite' (Minkowski 1936: 150).

If this vagueness cannot but irritate traditional ontology, it is welcomed instead by a renewed ontological approach. An inflationary one, founding itself both upon a phenomenology that 'in fact, at least initially, knows no negation' (ibid: 116) and upon the heuristic power of everyday language, which is therefore willing to enrol into the ordinary ontological catalogue also dimensions like atmospheres, considering them the more positively active the more they are evanescent:²¹ 'when I enjoy a given thing, I linger on it, but at the same time the object becomes less of an

^{18 &#}x27;The atmosphere of a thing extends itself precisely wherever the presence of this thing entails a difference.' (Hauskeller 1995: 33)

¹⁹ A transparency devoid of distinctness because of the bright intensity, according to Lehmann (1986: 155–156, 159, 190 and *passim*).

²⁰ Atmosphere would not benefit, for instance, from an excessive formal vividness: 'no one would like to live in an infinitely vivid place, where everything is patently connected to everything else [...] We don't wish to live in a goldfish bowl; we would be overwhelmed by a multiplicity of evocative signs.' (Lynch 1981: 143)

²¹ Speaking of 'emotionally tuned space' (Stroker 1977) might in fact make one mistakenly suppose the previous existence of a pre-emotional space (Böhme 2006a:122).

Introduction 7

"object" to me, and the sensorial pleasure it gives to me becomes less "sensorial". The "contours" of the object and the way in which it invests me lose something of their precision, while upon everything an atmosphere of discrete fascination is cast, which indeed I enjoy' (ibid: 187). One might wonder (see *infra* especially 3.4 and 3.5) what the criteria of identity and identifiability of atmospheres are, whether they exist independently from the subject or at least from his awareness; if and to what extent they supervene on given features and materials; whether they constitute a semantic or *de dicto* vagueness (the atmospheric description designates a given situation in a vague way) or instead, as we like to think, a metaphysical or *de re* vagueness (the atmospheric description designates a vague entity in a precise way), analogous to that attributable to many other quasi-things, such as colours, shadows, etc. In any case, one thing must be restated: clarity is not 'an absolute value [...] It only represents a form of life, one of the many. For nothing in the world, in the name of clarity, would we renounce obscurity, night, mystery and the intense life palpitating in these phenomena, offering itself to us' (ibid: 137–138).

In short, we would never renounce vagueness (in this case, the atmospheric one), from which one must therefore never exit. If anything, it is a matter of learning to stay in it in the right way, especially preferring, to naïve sentimentalism, 'a reflective and emancipated relation with one's perception' (Hasse 2005: 362; see also 2000:163), namely one in which the affective experience is integrated by a reflection not devoid of critical potentialities. If 'learning how to relate to atmospheres makes the single man into a member, and critical interpreter, of the world we live in today' (Böhme 2006a: 53), it is because only an adequate atmospheric competence (both productive and receptive) could immunise us from the media-emotional manipulation which the aesthetisation of politics and social life in the late-capitalistic 'scenic' economy results in. Providing that, of course, we admit that the unintentionality which phenomenology returns to 'is not that which is prior to philosophy or prior to reflection [but] the unreflected which is understood and conquered by the reflective' (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 19; see 1945: 18): that is, an immediacy grasped by a philosophy that for its aesthetic,²² or rather aesthesiological, nature, aspires to present itself as the first philosophy.

²² In the sense in which 'aesthetic' is 'what engages our senses, arouses in us sensations and feelings and thus imprints on our consciousness.' (Zur Lippe 1987: 17)



Chapter 1

Atmospheric Perception

1.1 Atmospheric Segmentation?

The atmospheric – while uniting and allowing for a productive tuning – divides at the same time, given that 'through the entire world of human life, under the sign of the atmospheric, just as in the animal reign under the sign of the olfactory, there are numerous invisible, yet selective and efficacious, frontiers' (Tellenbach 1968: 56). That is, segmentations that are natural as much as socio-cultural, like that (more violent than one would imagine) between the 'happy few' self-elected priests of good taste and all 'the others'. With their facilitating factors of unification, objects undoubtedly guarantee representational, and therefore ontological, advantages on the basis of dualisms (in primis that between mind and body) that would even count as the evolutionary answer of the species. And yet, as soon as the cognitive distance (required by representation and judgment so as to overcome the roughness of lived experience) is reduced, as soon as one leaves behind the thingness typical of naïve physicalism as well as the obsessive epistemic causalism, things change and it is not so much dualisms that impose themselves on us for their undisputable aesthetic primal character, but rather emotional situations that involve us on the affective-corporeal level. And their ontological primal character, on the contrary, suggests the hypothesis – opposed to that of evolutionary psychology – that the separation between things and meanings is only a late phenomenon in biophysical evolution (being, moreover, exclusively human) with respect to the more primal symbioticity.

In this sense, the basic ontological elements would not be things but (atmospheric) meanings, namely 'that kind of living system of meanings which makes the concrete essence of the object immediately recognizable, and allows its "sensible properties" to appear only through that essence. [...] In the normal subject

¹ It is Descartes 'Baby (Bloom 2004: 177 ff.).

the object "speaks" and is significant, the arrangement of colours straight away "means" something' (Merleau-Ponty 2005: 151) – notwithstanding that, following Aristotle, what is prior in experience can turn out to be cognitively successive (and more enigmatic). Why on earth, in fact, should solid and contoured bodies be more real than vague entities, which we experience without referring them to solidity,² such as fluids, gas processes or even quasi-things like atmospheres? So much so that atmospheres, far from being abstractions or mere possibilities, preserving their identity in our (especially involuntary) memory, seem to guarantee even 'the immutable preserved in what is past' (Tellenbach 1968: 31). Be it the innumerable and elegant examples of atmospheric memories of the *Recherche* (from the *Madeleine* onwards) or Léon Daudet's more prosaic pea soup,³ what every good novel exemplifies extensively is that our lived experience – especially if untied from generally reifying senses like sight and touch – is not segmented first of all into discrete objects, but in feelings poured out in the surrounding space, felt by the felt-body before any analytical distinction.

Due to their priority and (relative) objectivity, atmospheres must certainly then be registered in the ontological repertory originated by our ordinary, intuitive and pragmatically efficacious segmentation of reality (which is firstly aesthesiological, then socio-cultural and so on). In short, it is a matter of affective and corporeal conditions aroused in the subject by external situations;⁴ they are pre-dualistic and, in principle, opaque to the so-called expert knowledge and yet, as invariants obtained from a flux, still classifiable into a familiar and sufficiently systematic repertory (atmospheric topics) of affective-emotional kinds:⁵ a phenomenologically

^{2 &#}x27;If the inelastic fluid is already almost entirely devoid of its own specific shape, only the gas is utterly devoid of it, *despite the fact that it can still be experienced*, for instance in the resistance of moving air' (Klages 1929–32: 963–964; my emphasis). 'We find no normative reason for the fact that it is daylight and a step distance that present the world to us as it is. Why could it not be twilight and a thousand step distance that present the world in a more correct way?' (Schapp 2004: 95)

³ Attracted to the nurse that, at the La Charité hospital, distributed it to the patients, Léon Daudet (1928: 127) remembers 'how delicious it was and how the sight and the perfume [...] of that pea soup suited her blonde hair [...] Ever since, every pea soup has stayed alive and clear in my memory'.

⁴ As the sociologist also admits: 'by perception I mean a process of contemporaneous irradiation of the social goods or men and the perceptive activity of corporeal feeling.' (Löw 2001: 195–196)

⁵ See the catalogue of it proposed by Tellenbach (1968: 63) on the basis of the criteria of temperature, tension and consistency (dirty-filthy vs. pure; fresh-icy vs warm-hot;

'true' repertory, as it is passively perceived,⁶ almost as if it were the point of view of things.⁷

1.2 Perceiving Atmospheres

Philosophers, one could say, have so far only interpreted the world, in various ways: now the point is to perceive it. Also atmospherically. Then it might be convenient to begin by precisely defining, though with no pretentions of exhaustiveness and systematicity, what kind of perception the atmospheric one is, starting also from what it is not.

a. First of all, like ordinary perception, it is never only the belief of perceiving. While counting on the same reality index (owing to the identity of the real and the perceived), atmospheric perception is, nonetheless, never the unaffective and anaesthetic perception tackled by psychology handbooks, thus fatally confusing experience and experiment. It is only because of a logistic-epistemic strabismus, in fact, that perception is thought-of as 'if the external world were behind a door and we were in front of it, full of curiosity. Instead, opening an eye is not at all similar to looking through a door lock' (Piana 1979: 19): it is rather living significant impressions possibly without ascetic and/or reductionistic shortcuts. That is, to have an experience and not the distancing-constative process that specialised psychology limits itself to, namely not the mere passive-reflective registration of a portion of the visual field by an immobile eye thought of along the model of the camera obscura or the 'open window'. If it is untrue that 'we stop seeing when we close our eyes' (Minkowski 1936: 132), it is precisely because the optical

perturbing-hostile-foreign vs. familiar-friendly-intimate, etc.).

^{6 &#}x27;I cannot perceive [an object] without attributing to it at the same time the possibility of impressing me in this or that way. The relation is always mutual, so that perceiving something always also means exposing oneself to its influence area or immerging oneself into its atmosphere, which is the same' (Hauskeller 1995: 155). For a convincing critique of oculocentrism see Pallasmaa (2005).

⁷ Griffero (2005a).

^{8 &#}x27;Visual habits have blurred the attention for things; hurriedly studied and apprehended words and concepts have surpassed sensations, thereby narcotising them.' (Rumpf 1994: 8)

reduction of the perceptive – despite being probably the evolutionary outcome of the weakening of animal olfaction – is probably much rarer than the affectively and synaesthetically engaging perception that interests us here.

b. Atmospheric perception, as we have anticipated, does not concern cohesive, solid, continuous objects mobile only through contact, nor discrete forms and movements, but rather chaotic-multiple situations (see *infra* 1.6) endowed with their own internal significance⁹ and whose phenomenical efficiency must be radically disjointed from the physical stimulus. Borrowing a term established in aesthetics, philosophical anthropology and hermeneutics, we could therefore identify atmospheric percepts with the 'significances', ¹⁰ in particular with emotional saliences at least partly cognitively penetrable, in that they derive more from a 'noticing' than a purely optical seeing, ¹¹ and they are in any case so immediate that they need no deciphering. ¹²

The eye comes always ancient to its work, obsessed by its own past and by old and new insinuations of the ear, nose, tongue, fingers, heart, and brain. It functions not as an instrument self-powered and alone, but as a dutiful member of a complex and capricious organism. Not only how but what it sees is regulated by need and prejudice. It selects, rejects, organizes, discriminates, associates, classifies, analyzes, constructs. It does not so much mirror as take and make; and what it takes and makes it sees not bare, as items without attributes, but

^{9 &#}x27;Every perception of something unique, for instance a colour, a thing or a quasithing, is therefore from the beginning also the perception *that* something is in a certain way, the perception of states of things that do not manifest themselves necessarily in an explicit way, while they can instead be profoundly immersed in the chaotic-multiple significance of the situation.' (Schmitz 2002b: 18)

^{10 &#}x27;No perception without a lived significance [...] no objectification (perception, concept, knowledge) realised by the "I" and to be incorporated by the person in the absence of a significance lived by the "Es" and by the emotional stratum.' (Rothacker 1948: 172). See Scholtz 1992.

¹¹ In fact, our senses are always 'to a large degree informed senses' (Seel 2005: 50). See the objections to Danto (2001).

^{12 &#}x27;What is felt is not a visual quality but a face of the world, a certain *atmosphere* expressing itself, and not giving itself for reading or deciphering but for feeling in an immediate way, like in the moment when one feels the storm in the air or when one feels joy or sadness.' (Dufrenne 1991: 32, my emphasis)