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Atmospherology

- 1 As a rule, the general atmosphere of a city is not generated by a cumulative cognitive and experiential process, using a fatally constructivist synthesis that is conditioned by the psychological projection of the subject. According to an atmospherological approach (Griffero, 2010a; 2014) that highlights appearance *qua talis* and first impressions of what surrounds us, atmospheres (including urban ones) are rather quasi-things (Griffero, 2013). They are an example of that passive synthesis, largely inter-subjective and holistic, that precedes analysis and influences from the outset the emotional situation of the perceiver, resisting moreover any conscious attempt at projective adaptation. The atmosphere of a city, then, constitutes an influential “presence”, in some respects similar to the demonic and “numinous” powers or to the atmospheric colour aesthetically spread in the surrounding space by its occasional carriers¹. This is especially true of a perceiver who is sensitive to a “non-utilitarian urbanism” (Vazquez, 2010, p. 37), even if we are not necessarily convinced of the total metamorphic power over the *ambiance* of a situationist drift (which would make even the most unsightly things beautiful!) (*ibid.*, p. 38, 66). As a specific subjective experience: a) inextricably linked to embodied being processes (obviously in the sense of the phenomenological *Leib* or felt body) and b) characterised by a qualitative microgranularity which is inaccessible to a naturalistic-epistemic perspective (only in the third person), I believe that atmosphere is, in short, more a “spatial” state of the world than a very private psychic state.
- 2 This however, if we interpret “my” feeling not as something that I have, but as something that “possesses” me², presupposes the overturning of an introjectionist metaphysics (invention of the *psyche*) largely dominant in our culture. That is an aggressive “campaign” of de-psychologisation of the emotional sphere and of externalisation of feelings³, understood as situational constraints or affordances that, like climate

conditions, modulate the lived and pre-dimensional space whose presence we feel⁴ and as a consequence also our mood. As pervasive impressions that precede the subject/object distinction, their "authority" resonates in the "islands" (not in the organs) of our felt body⁵. However counterintuitive – we are after all attempting to think about the emotional sphere as it was conceived before psychicisation (5th century B.C.), that is before the demonic extrapersonal (*thymos*) was relegated to a fictional private psychic sphere (*psyche*) (Rappe, 1995) – this aesthetic-phenomenological conception of the atmospheric feeling as pre-subjective and pre-objective antagonist (Schmitz, 1969, p. 102) aims at correcting the dominant dualism and questioning a purely projective explanation of external feelings. We do not aspire to an impossible regression to a pre-introjectionist way of life, but simply to a healthy re-balancing of the predominant psychic ontology. Leaving aside here a more exhaustive theory of atmospheres⁶, it will suffice for the moment to briefly point out that atmospheres are not accessible to a representative-ocular-distal perception but to a deambulatory and synesthetic one. And that they set upon us as quasi-things that, regardless of their constituent vagueness – which can be stigmatised only by those who idealise the naturalistic *pathos* of certainty – radiate effects that are largely shared, and in any case are not ascribable to occasional subjective vibrations, at least within homogeneous cultures.

Urban figurability (or familiarity?)

- 3 In the same way as the scent of a rose supervenes on the materiality of the flower, the atmosphere of a city supervenes on urban materiality (Hasse, 2008b, p. 103), that is due to an enormous constellation of factors: geographical-climatic situation, historical and socio-economical condition, architectural-infrastructural quality, value expressiveness, language, nutrition and so forth. As a chaotic multiplicity distinguished by an internally diffuse significance (Schmitz), and as such more describable than rigorously and conceptually definable, the city possesses a powerful atmospheric charge, often mnestically crystallised or synthesised, in Benjamin's words, as "images of thought". It possesses, we could say, its own emotional and polysensorial "skin" (Hasse, 2000, p. 168; 2002b; 2003; 2008a), so much so that the townscape becomes a psychotopic landmark, the hub of mental maps, obviously more emotional than cognitive, in which the entire (lived) city is physiognomically condensed. It is a skin – I recall here another ontological and quasi-objective determination of atmospheres (Griffero, 2010a, p. 127-128; 2013, p. 15) – that is in no way a property of the object (of which object?), a mere shell for something more essential inside; it is a quality that things do not "have", but in the manifestation of which, if anything, they extinguish themselves. It is a pervasive way-of-being (Metzger, 1971, p. 77-78) that generates the affective space in which we (literally) enter, a corporeal "skin"⁷ with which its "character" totally identifies.
- 4 Might the image of the city be compromised by the rupture between form and functions, as well as by the dissolving of traditional community links (Damisch, 1998, p. 30)? And yet each city continues to express "a specific style, a slang or dialect, a form of humour, which sometimes has a special label" (Rykwert, 2003, p. 271), in other words an atmosphere. Whether it is its superficial or intensely lived image, urban atmosphere is still as ever "a being that has bewitched us, from which we cannot be parted; we remain its children or its timid visitors" (Mitscherlich, 1968, p. 32), unless our mood is so anaesthetic as to prevent us from cognitively noticing⁸, if not sharing, the existing

atmosphere. An atmosphere that naturally can differentiate itself and possibly collide with what we experience in residential or not strictly residential (markets, port, station, etc.) areas, generating an emotional map that consists on the one hand in illegitimately amplifying, connecting or separating urban singularities to obtain a standard (and fatally stereotyped) image, and on the other, rejecting the rhetorical ploy of the *pars pro toto*, in dissolving the urban fabric into atmospheric islands⁹.

- 5 The city possesses an atmospheric skin, certainly less superficial, even in terms of landscape that is travelled through: crossed by the *flâneur*, an urban substitute for the *promeneur* (Benjamin, 2002, p. 471, 473) or by the psychogeographer drifting aimlessly (Careri, 2006; Vazquez, 2010), or, and with more scientific reliability, by the urban sociologist, whose *parcours commentés*, the result of a careful and interdisciplinary *in situ* perception¹⁰, underline the fact that the tangible *ambiance* is co-determined by the physical *milieu*, by perceived phenomena, but also by social behaviours such as incorporation, actualisation and by the reconfiguration of the perceptible potential of the place travelled through (Thibaud, 2001, p. 97-98). The atmosphere of a city, thus, is also generated by walking, understood as a space of enunciation (de Certeau, 2005, p. 151), whose *langue* would be the urban system, and which would be followed by a process, hopefully subversive, of topographic appropriation, spatial realization of the place and pragmatic negotiation. As an intermittent result of a (also) phatic process, urban atmospheres perfectly embody the fact that all atmospheres, as opposed to things in the strict sense, appear and disappear, without the possibility of asking oneself where and how they exist when they are not perceived.
- 6 Whether this is the partially reflexive synthesis of a method or an exclusively impressionistic a priori, the urban atmosphere in any case manifests itself as a pervasive quality (Dewey), sometimes only superficial and preliminary, metaphoric and merely virtual: city views known only through cinema – such as the Manhattan skyline seen from normally impossible frontal or aerial perspectives¹¹ – derive their iconic force from processes that are always partially subjective such as the *pars pro toto* and the more or less intentional occluding of some parts, as is inferred by the synthesis of cities such as Moscow (immediately after the revolution), Las Vegas and Los Angeles in terms, respectively, of austerity and hesitation, permanently hallucinated spectacle and web of infinite flows (Thibaud & Thomas, 2004). This urban atmosphere cannot be deemed less effective only because it derives from the distal impressions of someone contemplating the city from a higher perspective rather than from the (more authentic?) ones of someone really “experiencing” it, perhaps finding unexpected places, or even parallel cities, travelling all over it and constructing novel psychogeographies¹². Moreover, the urban atmosphere is an image that quickly becomes such a myth that “when we actually go to those places, we go there with the idea of doing some things and not others” (Marback, Bruch & Eicher, 1998, p. 6). We are conditioned to do so by biotopes but also psychotopes, that is by “points in which the soul quietens down [and that] constitute, for those who owe what they are to this city as well, a part of their self-certainty” (Mitscherlich, 1968, p. 16)¹³. In the city – arguably a secularised remnant of homeland (Hasse, 2000, p. 52) – “each piece of world [is] increasingly subtracted from its sinister and less reassuring elements” (*ibid.*, p. 120). This is also due to the effectiveness of an insubstantial atmosphere, of a qualitative and (actively and pre-reflexively) qualifying vital aura, as is implied after all by the choice of the term *ambiance* (Thibaud, 2003, p. 284; 2012; Carnevali, 2006), the hypothetical organisability of which falls within the tasks of

human sciences and possibly of those institutions whose job is to "virtually establish an identity" (Müller & Dröge, 2005, p. 100). We should not however underestimate two elements: a) that many urban atmospheres are the unconscious result of planning (heterogenesis of aims), such as in the case of Manhattan, which offered its inhabitants "the spectacle, inscribed in stone, concrete and steel, of a way of life obeying a very different program, one answering a question quite different from that of 'housing'" (Damisch, 1998, p. 153) – the results, however, were far from what was expected; b) that atmospheres are sometimes more a transcendental unconscious, a background perceptive condition, than a thetic object of transitive perception (Thibaud, 2003, p. 293).

- 7 If we assume that situations totally devoid of atmosphere, defined by a sharpness lacking in both retentional and protensional auras (Fränkel & Joel, 1927, p. 91f.), are pathological, we then have to admit that the (physiognomic) "character" more often involved in urban perception is that of "familiarity". This notion, however, is polyvocal. The urban atmosphere seems familiar when the city allows even newcomers to feel at home, to be in control of their existence thanks for instance to a uniform reticular scheme or to the availability of kinetic styles atmospherically synchronised and intuitive. This is also true of cities that give prominence to powerful motor suggestions that influence¹⁴ not so much "what" we are persuaded to do, but "how" we do it (Thibaud, 2003, p. 290f.). And possibly in the first place when it offers reversible directions: as happens at home, where we go from one room to the other without any reason in particular, and where we can either sit or lie in the same armchair, so we feel at home in those cities where we can "get lost" without any social approval, where we are not forced to focus exclusively on what is ahead of us and we move perceptively in all directions, without demanding functional (psychological but also bodily) twists, where, finally, it is as easy to be a guest of someone as it is to reciprocally host them (Schmitz, 2008, p. 34). Here familiarity, of which we should not in any case omit the side effects (such as the sometimes suffocating provincial life), does not seem to totally contrast with what is required by the apologists of hodologic subversion, for whom movement is not alienating only when it produces a (circumscribed) heretic exception to the prevailing use of roads, merely functional and teleological, to their ideal continuation into infinity and to their rigid kinetic economy (pedestrians, cars, bicycles, etc.). In any case, we could define as inhospitable the atmosphere of a city that is devoid of identity, urbanistically incoherent, counterintuitive in its road system, lacking trajectories and names that are capable of generating a semantic magnetisation (de Certeau, 2005, p. 158, 160, 164), perceived only as a place of forced residence and work: perceived, in other words, as an "outside" in which we can never feel at home.
- 8 It is certainly not a recent discovery that the city expresses a specific atmosphere. The notion of urban atmosphere is anticipated, for instance, by that of "effect", chosen by Sitte (1889) as the key concept in an organic-pictorial town planning inspired by late impressionism that could contrast, enhancing places of value (Venturi Ferriolo, 2009, p. 172ff.), the progressive anaesthetisation of modern urban planning (monotonous, unnatural and devoid of harmony) (Porfyriou, 2010). But it is anticipated also by the more recent one of urban imageability, with which we envisage, regardless of cartographic objectivity, an encounter between the subject and certain objective qualities¹⁵ that can generate a powerful and identity-driven image of places (Lynch, 1971, p. 31-32), significantly absent in so-called "gentrification": an atmosphere-figurability encouraged by both the ease with which one finds one's bearings¹⁶ and more sophisticated qualitative

performances¹⁷ aimed at identity legitimation (Damisch, 1998, p. 32). So "place identity is closely linked to personal identity. 'I am here' supports 'I am' " (Lynch, 1981, p. 134). Furthermore, the olfactory landscape¹⁸ and the acoustic landscape (in the broadest sense)¹⁹ should also be taken into account, with variations according to nationality, climate, customs and traditions, etc.

- 9 Attempting a wide-ranging but far from exhaustive exemplification, the atmosphere will be different if the town is historical, even full of ruins that suggest the revenge of nature over the superb rationality of human actions (Simmel *docet!*), and in any case capable of growing old with dignity, without giving rise to rejection and to the desire (Fromm, 2008, p. 71), also aesthetical, to rapidly demolish it, or if it is a *new town*, perhaps rebuilt as it was, possibly producing a kitsch result. If it has a lively centre or only equivalent areas, satellite-neighbourhoods or even pleasant garden cities. If it is urbanistically compact or if it has been planned according to a high rate of zoning, if it isolates people in dull silo-like residential buildings, with a marked distinction between uptown and downtown, and even includes gated communities (possibly developed vertically: skyscrapers and penthouses), or if it allows those who inhabit it a constant proximity. The atmosphere will also be different if the city is made up of narrow streets and winding alleys, resistant to vehicle traffic and thus apparently made for "the people", or if it consists of large tree-lined avenues and freeways. If it relegates its socialisation to shopping malls or if there is a main street (atmospherically different, by the way, if it is specific or standardised) and maybe a both vertical and horizontal spacious Latin-style square, whose identity as a place of transit or for spending time (theatres, parks and *cafés*) in European historical cities is perceived all the more suddenly and powerfully the more we arrive there from streets that are far from airy, or from spaces that exasperate us due to traffic, or are experienced as forced directions (Kazig, 2008, p. 153ff.). Moreover, different atmospheres will derive from the existence of a symbolically charged skyline, from the accessibility or menacing privatisation of buildings²⁰, from the presence of a museum capable of "creating a novel kind of public atmosphere" (Rykwert, 2003, p. 297), attracting the cult of that world religion that tourism (also in its elite form) has become today. Atmospheres will be different again if, as is the case with small towns, or even in larger towns or at least in its "state-of-mind districts" (Vazquez, 2010, p. 84), we can use a determinative article to identify precisely all essential commercial activities (here is *the* bakery, here is *the* chemist, etc.). And if roads do not lead to an indeterminate vastness, but link safely (in other words without requiring a constant and alert awareness of possible dangers) and largely reversibly socially established places. Or if on the other hand there is, as with anomic metropolises, a mind-blowing availability of commercial activities, many fundamentally equivalent to each other, and roads appear to have no purpose, leading to places that are so semantically "empty" that they are effectively non-places.

The atmosphere (de-axiologised)

- 10 We should however dispel some misinterpretations. First of all, that a merely built-up city (the so-called urban region) is *ipso facto* devoid of atmosphere. That only the historical centre, the "old" and/or "upper"²¹ town has an atmosphere, to the detriment of the suburbs or outskirts, inaccurately believed to be incapable of inducing lived experiences. Finally, that the atmosphere of a city has to necessarily be similar to the one you breathe

in a village, typified that is by situations of lifeworld that are not occurring but available, and by reassuring routines (Schmitz, 2008, p. 37).

- 11 The fact is that we should consider atmospheres even those emanating from the quiet urban places of anonymous metropolitan life, which “as oases in which to find oneself, as sentimental spaces capable of a calming, identity-forming and maybe even therapeutic effect” (Fromm, 2008, p. 90), satisfy each time our need for sense (cinemas, restaurants, museums, offices, gardens, parking spaces, etc.). It is true that we discover the appeal of some thoroughfares only when they are closed to traffic, but the fact is that they exude some sort of atmosphere – maybe negative – even during the worst traffic jam. In short, and steering away from neoromantic regressive temptations that are never totally absent in the atmospherological discourse: there is no atmosphere only where (*à la* Dewey) we recognise an organic situational reunification, where buildings are in ruins (without being degraded)²², but also where we experience an irritating levelling of places, where a fragmentary, and as such lacking a specific value core, place is the set for an anonymous bustle. In other words: the theory according to which we can deem aesthetic only the exposure to foreign and provocative spaces, that are for this reason more subject to interpretation (Haapala, 2004, p. 49, 51), is overly conditioned by a model derived by twentieth century *avant-gardes*. However, it is only in the name of a preconceived and nostalgic cultural criticism that we rule out the fact that an atmosphere can manifest itself “even in the chimney of a factory, in a clay-coloured housing block, in a barracks-like hotel” (Klages, 1940, p. 282).
- 12 As the result of urban self-representation, even the inhospitability of the contemporary city is an atmosphere, perhaps, and unfortunately, under the guise of a “petrified nightmare” (Mitscherlich, 1968, p. 29). Is it not true after all that even the suffocating courtyards and grimy alleyways found in Dickens exude their special atmosphere? The “intensification of the nervous life” foretold by Simmel (1995, p. 36), the emotional indifference and the objective culture produced by European urbanisation, in which “everything appears flat, grey, dull, incapable of inspiring any preference” (*ibid.*, p. 54, 43), is in turn an atmosphere, specifically one of superficiality and “nervousness”. In a similar way, a “landscape” is such even when it is disfigured by artifice, and we can call atmospheric even the negative emotional and felt body involvement that we feel in the most chaotic and anonymous city, in cold and abstract places, even in so-called non-places. Having duly de-axiologised the notion of atmospheric “skin” (Hasse, 2002a), we can certainly state that even “a road with a long and stereotyped row of houses similar to each other is by no means a neutral road in terms of its form, but is on the contrary very effective on experience due to its exhausting monotony, that is felt and rejected as being cold, anonymous, absent and provokingly ‘without place’ ” (Lorenzer, 1968, p. 70).

Living as immersive “cultivation” of atmospheres

- 13 Despite the fact that the “scopic and gnostic drive” (de Certeau, 2005, p. 144) pushes us to privilege the aerial view of a city, the atmospheric quality of a city naturally derives from its immanent architectural character, which, as “atmosphere and mood, [...] the perfectly tempered feel of his built spaces is immediately communicated to viewers, residents, visitors and the immediate neighbourhood” (Labs & Ehlert, in Zumthor, 2006, p. 7). It derives in other words from an interiorised pattern (“habitability”), that architecture should take into account if it is to offer not philosophical utopias but “lived experiences”

(Janson, 2005, p. 147), and if it is true that the “‘experiential’ measure of the quality of an environment or of an environmental element” depends not only on functional but “emotional, communicational and symbolic aspects, typical of the relation between people and the physical-spatial structure” (Bonaiuto, Bilotta & Fornara, 2004, p. 36, 9). Even those who demolish a building at times are compelled to preserve somehow the spirit of the place, for instance re-using elements from the previous building (Koolhaas, 2000).

- 14 Steering away from an apology (overly postmodernist) of the urban lived experience to the detriment of a less discontinuous and as such more reflective experience, we nevertheless must stress that design, as *mise-en-scène* of experiences closely linked to the expressive potential of the felt body (Meisenheimer, 2006), should not and cannot disregard “how we feel” in the designed space. It cannot underestimate the fact that even the shadow cast by a building, which invades the neighbouring space, determines a powerful aesthetic and felt body effect (and therefore atmospheric)²³: from irritability to insomnia, to breathing difficulties and the aesthetic *diminutio* of the place, etc. As with every *Gestalt*, buildings “can communicate to us only what we ourselves express with their qualities, [that is] relations of weight, hardness, etc., all those aspects that for us possess an expressive value [...], life’s great feelings, *atmospheres*, that have as a premise the lasting condition of bodies” (Wölfflin, 1985, p. 30; my italics). This also explains the organic-kinaesthetic effect of the optic, and especially of symmetry and asymmetry on breathing as “the more direct organ of expression” (*ibid.*, p. 35) and on muscles (*ibid.*, p. 33). Albeit theoretically feeble²⁴, unfortunately partly still projectivistic²⁵ and at times very *naïf* in its associations (weight-nostalgia, symmetry-wellbeing, windows-eyes, round arch-happiness, etc.), Wölfflin’s late nineteenth century approach already correctly traces back formal perception to affectively and bodily feeling oneself in the presence of something else (Böhme, 2006a, p. 110).
- 15 By generating “orientations, kinetic suggestions, markings” (Böhme, 2006a, p. 113), buildings produce a wide range of atmospheres in the city. Sometimes even by virtue of their metaphorical sonority – “there are buildings that resonate wonderfully, that tell me: I am safe, I am not alone” – or of their “physical and in all likelihood psychic” (Zumthor, 2006, p. 33, 35) temperature: think for instance about the bureaucratic coldness hinted at by a wholly interiorised building (made of glass or granite). Whether they are buildings capable of powerful pathic suggestions or urban constellations *en plein air*, offering authentic scripted spaces (Klein, 2004, p. 11), urban atmospheres, which no longer only belong to religion or power but also to consumption, force the perceiver to “immerse themselves in them” (Bieger, 2007), or in fact to rapidly alternate between immersion and emersion (Bieger, 2011, p. 93). Responsible for “immediate understanding, immediate contact, immediate rejection” (Zumthor, 2006, p. 13), and generated fundamentally by everything – “things, people, air, noises, tone, colours, material presences, structures, also forms” (*ibid.*, p. 17)²⁶, they pathemically modulate the pericorporeal space of the observer.
- 16 It is now time to “move into the drawing room”, to change to inhabiting as a “third skin” (Funke, 2006), which does not consist in having a roof over one’s head, but in “inscribing things and places from one’s environment, neutral in their meaning, within a profile of personal significance” (Hasse, 2008a, p. 109). Dwelling is equivalent to making non-Euclidean and thus anisotropic one’s space, hence promoting a nurturing of atmospheric feelings possible only at home. It may be that self-realisation today is overly dependent

upon the private and can degenerate into a "tyranny of intimacy" (Sennett, 1977) or into a defensive and immune obsession (Sloterdijk)²⁷, but there is no doubt that the home is a very special generator of (plural!) atmospheres. Once again, these are different whether they are prototypical (objective, external and unintentional), derivative (objective, external and intentionally produced) or decidedly spurious in their relational nature (subjective and projective). And different more specifically depending, to give only one example, on the changing criterion of room organisation, once linked to each other ("railway station" atmosphere), then positioned around a corridor or hall (from which a more stable domestic atmosphere derived), and finally dissolved in today's large open spaces, with their illusionary atmosphere of vastness and freedom. Where it is obvious not only that often abstract aesthetics and concrete atmosphere diverge, as is the case for instance when elegant furniture inhibits conversation (Hall, 1968, p. 133, 141), but also that "residential satisfaction" as "evaluating response definable as the pleasure or gratification deriving from living and inhabiting a specific place" (Bonaiuto, Bilotta & Fornara, 2004, p. 47), should never be confused with contingent status symbols: nor for instance with the fetishism of domestic hygiene, nor with the privilege of the drawing room as a formal space, as a "stately room with no castle behind it" (Mitscherlich, 1968, p. 115, 122). Regardless of its success, the culture of dwelling, at least until by saying "come to see me" we will mean "come to my house" (Dürckheim, 2005, p. 93), is in every way a search for the right atmosphere, as protective of privacy as it is capable of satisfying the socio-expressional needs of the inhabitants. Atmosphere and domosphere are thus inextricably linked, since "dwelling is feeling to feel oneself, perceiving to perceive oneself" (Vitta, 2008, p. 97), a felt body disposition that, fusing *aisthesis* and *pathos*, is produced not only by comfort and domestic warmth²⁸ but also by the possibility of simply sitting in an armchair and, closing one's eyes, suddenly entering a "new world" (Schmitz, 1977, p. 207).

Conclusion

- 17 I have only sketched an atmospherologic analysis of urban life. We should now go beyond the *naïf* but undeniable sensation that if we remove the square from a certain city we would not atmospherically perceive it as an extension of our space (and as a consequence of habitability) and undertake an aesthetic and psychosocial analysis capable of appropriately contextualising this immediate impression into an exhaustive discourse on the city as global mood. A discourse capable also to distinguish things and situations to which the capacity of evoking certain atmospheres in the urban space is inherent in a relatively constant way from those that on the contrary do so only occasionally, depending in other words both on the constellation of which they become part and on the subjective mood of those considering them.
- 18 In the case of urban atmosphere, understood as peculiar quasi-objective synthesis of "ecstasy" of materials, social moods (possibly manipulated) and socially necessary communication processes, we must in any case avoid any dangerous fluctuation between extreme polarities such as the anomy of absolute (and only apparently emancipatory) freedom and the viscosity of a call (always regressive) for some form of homeland. This would lead us to recognise in the interweaving of urban meaningfulness and freedom, in "architectural capacity", that it is precisely the city, as "machine of tolerance" (Janson & Wolfrum, 2008, p. 107, 103) if not as playground for psycho-geographical detours in

search of passionate trajectories or *ambiances* that are as variable as geologic plaques (Vazquez, 2010, p. 51), that is inhabitable not only when a private part is enclosed²⁹ – despite the undoubted need for some form of screening against interfering exogenous atmospheres – but when it is lived until one's traces are freely impressed on it (de Certeau, 2005).

- 19 But again, let us proceed by setting aside neo-romantic and movementist temptations. Situationist drifts, for instance, are not necessarily more atmospheric than *flânerie*, unjustly thought of (politically) as a nefarious form of identity rootedness (idiocy) and defence of the existent (Vazquez, 2010, p. 188, 87). The mere playful passing by, that tests "the soundscape, lighting, climate, conversations, encounters, tastes (the right spirits) and smells, good or bad", that promotes the improper use of spaces, exploits meetings with the right people (!) and even the superior sensitivity to atmosphere of temporary workers (!) (Vazquez, 2010, p. 73, 164, 163, 154-155), does not offer anything more or better than simply strolling and (so very *bourgeois*!) living. However a discussion on the atmospheric potential of the performative experience of urban space, as well as on its being an effect of provisions for planning and for manipulating an economy of *mise-en-scène* founded on desires that are by definition unsatisfiable (Böhme, 2001, p. 49ff., 175ff.) – provisions that we nevertheless need to know to be able to at least partially defend ourselves³⁰ – would take us too far. As Socrates knowingly artfully concludes: of all this another time!

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NOTES

1. Otto (1989); Merleau-Ponty (2003, p. 353, 417).
2. Schmitz (2003, p. 181); Klages (1976, p. 349; 1979, p. 449).

3. For an initial approach to the philosophy of atmospheres see Tellenbach (2013), Schmitz (1969; 1998; 2006; 2011), Böhme (1989; 1995; 1998; 2001; 2006a; 2006b), Hauskeller (1995), Griffero (2010a; 2014), Thibaud (2012) and Rauh (2012).
4. See Gibson (1999); Griffero (2009; 2010b).
5. On the "corporeal islands" see Schmitz (1965) and Griffero (2010d; 2013).
6. Griffero (2010a; 2014). See also Griffero (2006; 2009; 2010c).
7. This metaphor indicates the indistinctness of both physical space and lived space, and that of the physical body and the felt-body (of the perceiver) (Hasse, 2000, p. 118, 133).
8. Atmospheres for us do not exist only when they occur, but also when they are planned (this is what Böhme calls "aesthetic work") and when they are noted even without being entranced by them. See also Hasse (2008b, p. 108).
9. "Units of *ambiance*, rather than being scattered little islands, are continents that move on the surfaces of cities, which tend to move away, draw close, break up and split along fault lines, driven by the forces of passionate attraction" (Vazquez, 2010, p. 133).
10. Which presupposes a) the impossibility of a *surplomb* position, b) the interaction between saying and perceiving, and ultimately precisely c) ambulation.
11. From other points of view, in fact, Manhattan "juts out from a desert formed by industrial wreckage, rail tracks and fragmented city blocks" (Knodt, 1994, p. 9).
12. Amin & Thrift (2001, p. 28-48) imagine an integration of *flânerie*, urban rhythms and footprints from the past.
13. "Psychic support [...] to which a uniform interest should be dedicated, towards which we should turn with a constant affectivity" (Mitscherlich, 1968, p. 56).
14. With the exception of extreme cases (noisy excitement at the stadium and silent meditation in a church).
15. A "between" made possible by co-presence (corporeal but also social and symbolic) of subject and object (Böhme, 2001, 2006a) and not only difficult to trace back to the two poles (Thibaud & Thomas, 2004, p. 108) but, strictly speaking, even previous to them.
16. "It is sufficient for a landmark to permit a visitor to find his/her bearings and immediately the most avid real estate agents will start calling it an 'identity point'" (Rykwert, 2003, p. 165).
17. According to Lynch (1996): vitality-meaning-coherence-accessibility-control, plus two meta-criteria like efficiency and justice.
18. "Smells make it possible to identify places and to identify with places" (Böhme, 1998, p. 50).
19. According to Böhme (*ibid.*, p. 64) it is possible to acoustically distinguish even between the pedestrian areas of the various German cities.
20. The atmosphere of the oldest skyscrapers in New York ("porous bases, crossed by semi-public and commercial spaces of various kinds", lobbies "purposely designed to be on show to the public") has disappeared from the most recent ones ("entrances [...] menacingly under surveillance"), thus proving the failure of the American egalitarian dream (Rykwert, 2003, p. 273).
21. More atmospheric perhaps only because, having been integrated for some time into the landscape and having undergone a gradual and organic development, it is not subjected to critical assessment (Gombrich, 1991, p. 264-278).

22. As Peregalli (2010) nostalgically means.
23. With regard to installation of wind turbines, see Hasse (2005, p. 377-387). See also Wendorf *et al.* (2004).
24. "The issue of whether it is the physical history of the human body that conditions the shapes of architecture or vice versa, would take us too far for it to be discussed in this essay" (Wölfflin, 1985, p. 73, 57). But this is precisely the point that deserves discussion!
25. "What we know of ourselves, the sensation that stretching out comfortably, peacefully relaxing brings to us, we *transpose* to this kind of distribution of masses and we enjoy the serene tranquility that buildings of this type arouse in us" (*ibid.*, p. 54; my italics).
26. An example would be the overturning of the hierarchical-symbolic order, and therefore atmospheric order too, produced by lifts (Simmen & Drepper, 1984), widespread use of glass and steel, design of the space outside the building (Böhme, 2006a, p. 86-87, 116-118 ; Zumthor, 1999, p. 22). See also Hasse (2008b).
27. A segregation that is on the other hand contradicted by the porosity of domestic walls (satellites, internet, mobile phones, etc.).
28. Characters that are blatantly synaesthetic even if they are relatively variable. For an American and for a German, for example, "the open and closed door does not in any way have the same meaning" (Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 169).
29. Perhaps as far as the solipsistic aestheticisation of lofts from which the occupant's parked car can even be constantly seen (see Hasse, 2008a, p. 120ff.)
30. From my point of view it is not true that "seeking the laws of conditioning does not free you from it, but on the contrary, deepens it", leading to a "science of control" (Vazquez, 2010, p. 83).

ABSTRACTS

What is an urban atmosphere? Through an atmospherological (aesthetical-phenomenological) approach, primarily inspired by the new aesthetics (Böhme) and the new phenomenology (Schmitz), the paper investigates what creates the overall impression (imageability) of a city, if its atmosphere must necessarily be that of familiarity and how our dwelling-house can be understood as a real culture (or cultivation) of immersive atmospheres.

Qu'est-ce qu'une atmosphère urbaine ? A partir d'une approche atmosphérologique (esthétique-phénoménologique), inspirée principalement par la nouvelle esthétique (Böhme) et la nouvelle phénoménologie (Schmitz), l'article enquête sur ce qui crée l'impression d'ensemble (imagibilité) d'une ville, si son atmosphère doit nécessairement être celle de la familiarité et comment l'habiter peut être compris en termes d'une véritable culture des atmosphères immersives.

INDEX

Mots-clés: atmosphères urbaines, quasi-objets, communication corporelle

Keywords: urban atmospheres, quasi-things, corporeal communication

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