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Rapture "At a Distance": Searching for Pathic-Atmospheric Aesthetics

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The paper proposes a rethinking of the role of aesthetics as a theory of sensory experience as it is encountered in the lifeworld (and only secondarily in relation to art). Accordingly, pathic and atmospheric (bottom-up) aesthetics, which centers on the ability to expose oneself to intense experiences without attempting to control them and conceives feelings as atmospheric powers that permeate a particular space without being reduced to projections of the perceiver's moods, should replace the idealistic (top-down) approach. Classical aesthetics, predominantly idealistic (in a broad sense, from Schelling to Adorno), was focused, in fact, exclusively on art as a miraculous experience of a truth (sacred, ontological, and even utopian-political) accessible only to a bourgeois class whose paradigm is detached contemplation.

On the contrary, today it seems preferable to recognize in art one of the many ways (certainly the most sophisticated) of generating emotions that the pervasive "aesthetic economy" of our times relies on. However, even the reinterpretation of aesthetics and its fundamental concepts in pathic and atmospheric terms—if it is to avoid reductionism and the numerous, partial attempts to define in what sense and when a work of art is atmospheric—must not reduce art (in all its historical-symbolic complexity) to the atmospheres it evokes, nor reduce atmospheres (in their multifaceted, extra-artistic manifestation) merely to the works of art that might generate them.

For this reason, the atmospherological proposal, especially inspired by Hermann Schmitz's New Phenomenology and Gernot Böhme's Aisthetics, suggests that the experience of art could be considered a way of experiencing atmospheric feelings present in space—feelings that, in themselves, are even potentially destructive—under safe conditions (analogous to dwelling, garden art, etc.). It also questions the controversial possibility of intentionally generating atmospheres. In fact, atmospheric feelings can only be intentionally generated by the artistic subject within certain limits, and are more often condensed only occasionally in places, people, and objects (including works of art).

The experience of art as exposure to intense feelings within the boundaries of a safe space, that is, as a form of resonance of the felt body according to a complex dynamic between the poles of contraction and expansion, also invites an unprecedented comparison with the experience of law. Aesthetics (both of art and of everyday sensory experience) and law, freed from their more formalistic definitions, reveal themselves to be two realms ultimately founded on being affected by atmospheric feelings that cannot be resisted (anger and shame in the case of justice), and that only a civilizing process of "cultivation" allows one to experience without excessive trauma.

The comparison between the two domains is extended then to the way in which, respectively, taste and norms exert an authority (also atmospheric in nature) over a community and claim, with varying results, to apply even to groups more distant from the original core. Ultimately, it raises the question of whether, in the aesthetic-artistic domain, there can ever be the claim to absolute validity that sometimes drives a certain legal "fundamentalism" and proposes to conceive the emergence of a certain aesthetic taste as a feeling that, although not possessing an absolutely binding force, at least carries an authority from which it is far from easy to escape.

1. Aesthetics "from Below"

My provocative starting assumption is that ~~a~~esthetics is the past, atmospherology could be the future. If, in fact, aesthetics were only a philosophy of art, it could be a discipline that is "no longer obvious" (Schmitz 1977, 613–85; 1990, 455–97; 2007, 81–93). As a form of reflection, aesthetics peaked within the upper-class culture of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, wherein art acted as a surrogate for faith, metaphysics, and politics—specifically as revelation of the Absolute (Schelling), the Idea (Hegel), the manifestation of a truth irreducible to mere presence (Heidegger), and/or anticipation of an eschatological-utopian reality (Bloch, Adorno). However, it undoubtedly lost its centrality later on. This decline wasn't so much in the sense of

Hegel's famous "obituary" (taken literally),[1] according to which art would become something irreversibly "past" if compared to the unrepresentable divine spirit of Christianity.[2] The importance of aesthetics rather waned with the decreasing influence of stylizing Romantic creative forces, yielding to an increasingly superficial collective felt-bodily (*leiblich*) disposition (Klages 1964, 274–83; Schmitz 1980; 1990, 460; 1995, 9).

This harsh judgment of aesthetics as a thing of the past[3] is also supported by the argument that beauty is a much older metaphysical (and not necessarily artistic) theme (Schmitz 1977, 669) and aesthetics lacks genuine coherence as it wrongly combines very different terms such as *beautiful* and *sublime*, *artistic beauty* and *natural beauty*. However, this view is completely mistaken in relation to a different kind of aesthetics, which refers to Baumgarten's *aesthetica* as *cognitio sensitiva* or at least the English effect-aesthetics of the eighteenth century.[4] Thus, it proves to be a (wide-ranging) philosophy of perception,[5] whose core is a non-"gnostic" but "pathic" approach to phenomenal reality (Straus 1963).[6] As aesthesiology, it even claims to be *prima philosophia*, going far beyond the ancillary role typically ascribed to it by analytical aesthetics and neuro-aesthetics, and certainly being far more than a tool for hypertrophic and enthusiastic (allegedly) immersive media.[7] By opposing the otherwise irreversible process of "cerebration" (Gottfried Benn) associated with Western rationalism, it strives to even out the imbalance inherent in the one-sided project of Modernity. Unlike standard aesthetic theory (Böhme 2017a, 28–34), which "simply" finds in art a high-level exemplification of a pathic dimension permeating everyday existence, this kind of aesthetics, no longer considered as a critical judgment of art but as an aesthesiological reflection on ordinary perception, is entwined with the problems of the present.

It is thus possible to revise the initial provocative claim by stating that it is merely "traditional" aesthetics that belongs to the past, whereas atmospherological aesthetics, with its

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[1] That is, not in its possible interpretation as the emancipation of art from predefined content.

[2] According to Schmitz, the so-called thesis of the "death of art," which he considers to be merely a phrase (Schmitz 1977, 661), derives from an intellectualist confusion between art and truth. This confusion also underlies Heidegger's apology of art, which led him to "torment" texts in pursuit of some prophetic unsaid (Schmitz 1990, 458ff.): "truth is bound to the actuality of facts, art to distance in the apprehension of atmospheres" (Schmitz 1977, 660).

[3] Its genesis would be a hybrid product of idealistic-platonic (art as consciousness of the idea) and rhetorical aesthetics (management of affects), which is such a young discipline that it would be still in search of its own subject (cf. Schmitz 1977, 620).

[4] In this English aesthetics, although in a context that is still introjectionist and dualist (or even physiological, as in Burke), Schmitz sees an anticipation of his own conception of felt-bodily feeling as overcoming the idealist speculation on the infinite and the finite (Schmitz 1977, 683).

[5] *Contra* this assumption, see Schmitz (1998, 181).

[6] For the use of the term *pathic*, I am naturally also drawing on Ludwig Klages's anti-spiritual theory of the imaginal ("Pelasgic") ecstatic vision (Preußer 2015)—on Klages as a partial forerunner of atmospherological New Phenomenology, see Griffero (2024c)—and Gernot Böhme's pathic felt-bodily ethics (Böhme 2008).

[7] A frankly overrated trend (Griffero 2023).

latent possibilities, is only now beginning to be discerned in its full potential. If interpreted as atmospherology (Griffero 2014a; 2020b; 2021), and in the light of the so-called "atmospheric turn" (Griffero 2019, 2020a), aesthetics deals, on the one hand, with natural phenomena such as twilight, brightness, darkness, the seasons, wind, the weather, the hours of the day, fog, the greatness and power of nature (the sublime without its Kantian intellectual-anthropocentric interpretation), and more artificial phenomena such as the townscape, the soundscape, the holy as numinous, the *genius loci*, the charisma of a leader, etc. On the other hand, it has something to say about all those activities once stigmatized by elitist traditional aesthetics (stage design, advertising, landscape planning, event organization, museum design, cosmetics, urban planning, fashion, political and institutional communication, the entertainment industry, emotional and multisensory loyalty-oriented marketing, interior design, etc.) and which instead Böhme, since 1995, has rightly described as "aesthetic work," lying at the core of the "widespread design" and "aesthetic economy" characterizing the late-capitalist aestheticization of everyday life (Böhme 2017c). Thus, atmospherological aesthetics aims to combine and develop the old need for an "aesthetics of production" with an "aesthetics of effect" (*Wirkungsästhetik*) in a new way, seeking a renewed sensitivity-based "aesthetic education of humankind," also considering the concerns raised by the long-sought "critical theory" of atmospheres.

This kind of (pathic) aesthetics fits perfectly into the so-called New Phenomenology, a discipline developed by Hermann Schmitz. Its theoretical project, fully congruent with the multidisciplinary scientific interest in the emotional sphere, views philosophy as a reflection on involuntary vital experiences and how one "feels" in a certain space (a space that is lived, i.e., pre-dimensional and nongeometrical) (Schmitz 1969). Both perspectives, moreover, reject the millenary psychic introjection of affective states, which caused insurmountable difficulties in explaining how such an alleged internal world could acquire a reliable knowledge of the external world. Instead, they consider affective states as atmospheres, that is, as feelings external to the subject and often impervious to any amending projection by the subject. The predictable aesthetic consequence is then the need to investigate not so much the traditional categories of aesthetics (the beauty, the sublime, the artwork, etc.) but rather the pathic structure acting in any regional ontology (including art, of course). Furthermore, it is necessary to abandon the intellectualistic dimension of critical judgment, usually focused on art, and develop a reflection on the potential of ordinary (neither lab-experimental nor simply constative) affective perception.

A pathic aesthetics views "aesthetic experience" as a holistic atmospheric impression aroused by the situation "encountered" in the lifeworld, irreducible to the radical scientificization of experience (perhaps through technical apparatuses). This approach paves the way for a promising and deliberately "naïve" project of an aesthetics "from below" (rather than "from

above") (Geiger 1928, 153)—one that is not based on art[8] but on an emotional and felt-bodily involvement. As a "first impression," this involvement is freed, as far as possible, from the sensory and emotional narcosis imposed by perceptual habits.

New Phenomenology obviously avoids stigmatizing the emotional reception of art—the so-called pathetic fallacy—and underlines both the essential (not only ocular) presence of the felt body (*Leib*) and the way that all phenomena "happen" prior to any (inevitably egological) *epoché* and etiological explanation. Thus, it also amends the ordinary ontological repertoire of entities to include *qualia* and especially quasi-things (*Halbdinge*) (Schmitz 1978, 111ff.; Griffero 2017).[9] These are characterized by specific performative non-Gibsonian affordances, which invite the experiencer not so much to do, but to feel something (Griffero 2020b, 2022; Arbib and Griffero 2023).

Importantly, as a fuzzy term used to describe fuzzy phenomena, *atmosphere* seems too general, superficial, and often grossly reductive when hastily applied to the art world.[10] A kind of double asymmetry should be emphasized here: art is certainly more than an atmosphere, as it is too complex and socioculturally stratified a phenomenon to be "reduced" to everyday atmospheric experience. Similarly, an atmosphere is more than art, as it is too ubiquitous an experience, often unrelated to human intervention, to be "reduced" to the *numerus clausus* of artworks and the critical "discourse" on them. To say the least, it is far from easy to unambiguously establish the relationship between art and atmosphere.

2. Art and Atmosphere: A Real Puzzle

[8] "If only we could forget for a while about the beautiful and get down instead to the dainty and the dumpy!" (Austin 1979, 183).

[9] Atmospheres, unlike things proper, are quasi-things (neither mere *qualia* nor things proper). This means that (a) they are not edged, discrete, cohesive, solid, perduring in time, normally inactive, without concealed sides, and for this reason they coincide with their appearance; (b) not having inherent real tendencies, they have no history (they don't get old), are radically evenemential; (c) without being the property of something or universally predictable genera, they coincide with their own phenomenal and "actual" "character" (not with their subjective-personal resonance, however); (d) more immediate, intrusive, and demanding than things, they have an authority that is sometimes so absolute as to be irreducible to culturally emotional norms and to win any critical distance; (e) they have an intermittent life, in the sense that they come and go, without there being any point in asking what they did in the meantime but have some kind of identity; (f) they do not act as the separate causes of the influence but are the influence itself, exactly like the wind, that doesn't exist prior to and beyond its blowing.

[10] Schmitz's obviously questionable assumption is that a work of art cannot be reduced to feelings, let alone to a certain kind of mood (Schmitz 1977, 662). In his view, an artwork is sometimes so "empty" that it is completely atmospheric (where, somewhat surprisingly, "atmosphere" signifies something merely ornamental and superficial …).

There are many preliminary problems that would require independent investigation. For example, does focusing on the link between art and atmosphere mean dealing with the atmospheric feeling communicated by the artist, or with the kind of art that is highly capable of generating a contextual and atmospheric critical discourse within the art world? Does it mean focusing on the type of atmosphere (vague yet persistent, environmental rather than strictly semantic) intentionally or unintentionally evoked by the experience of art? Or should the emphasis be on how one approaches and perceives every work of art? Does it imply that preference should be given to art that makes use of properly atmospheric means—non-thingly, intangible, almost entirely immaterial aerial, gaseous, or impalpable media, or even virtual elements? Or should attention be directed to art whose historical style and poetics are more oriented toward expressing the emotional climate of its era? Does this primarily suggest dealing with artworks that demand a synesthetic approach, whose predominantly performative character triggers a profoundly immersive effect in the experiencer? Or should one focus on artworks capable of arousing emotions that, initially unconscious and latent, over time acquire a memorial significance? The list goes on, complicating matters.

It is obviously impossible to cover all these (and other conceivable) issues here. It is better to stick to the unsatisfactory elements in the most traditional views of "atmospheric art." First, it is frankly too simplistic to claim that a "true" and groundbreaking work of art is always atmospheric, especially when its qualitative-affective halo exceeds its strictly semantic value, or when it arouses a feeling that fully corresponds to the sentiment responsible for the genesis of the work itself. Furthermore, it is equally unsatisfactory to state that only artworks expressing "a sensual-emotional awareness of existential correspondences" (Seel 2005, 93) qualify as atmospheric, as this would imply that atmosphere is an exceptional quality rarely found in everyday experience. The same applies to the suggestion that it is the art world's (critical, institutional) atmosphere that ontologically transforms a common object into a real work of art—this is the so-called institutional theory of art popularized by George Dickie following Arthur Danto.[11] Nor is it sufficient to claim that art is atmospheric when it consists in showing an "appearance" inexistent outside the work itself, and/or maybe "happening" only through skillful communication strategies (performance, immersivity, dramaturgical exposure, etc.). This kind of art is supposedly fully dependent on the effective, albeit ephemeral, interaction with the public, to the point that, blurring any subject/object dualism like a readymade, the audience itself becomes part of the work of art itself (Hauskeller 2002, 176). It is also inadequate to say that atmospheric artworks are exclusively ephemeral, non-thingly, and hardly museumizable artifacts

[11] This suggestion, moreover, is only metaphorical, makes no reference to the affective/felt-bodily experience, and merely follows the model of so-called readymades.

(intangible installations made of light, air, gas, wind, dust, "art in nature," soundscapes, etc.)—something that, far from "representing" things and events, rather unearths "the shell that embraces all things" (Mahayni 2002, 62), something that coincides with its "optical presence, even without being physically tangible" (Schürmann 2003, 350). Even less agreeable is the notion of reducing the atmosphere of an artwork to its ability to be so self-referential as to induce the percipient to only focus on its mise-en-scène rather than its diegetic content—that is, in other terms, on the "factual" (the work of art as an object with its objective properties) rather than the "actual-fact" (the work of art as an irradiation of atmospheric qualities surrounding it) (for this distinction, see Albers 1975; Böhme 2001).

Although such assumptions grasp part of the problem, they remain severely reductive because they only privilege the atmospherological approach required by post-historical art and the "no-longer-beautiful-arts" (Marquard 1989), failing to illustrate the universally ontological-phenomenological role of atmosphere in all kinds of experience. A pathic aesthetics, on the contrary, prefers to point out that there is nothing atmospherically exceptional in the art world per se. Rather, art is a privileged gateway to learn what an everyday atmosphere is, as it allows one to "rehearse" (atmospherically) the experience of more general feelings (Böhme 1989, 148, 152–53; 1995, 16, 25; Bockemühl 2002, 219–21). Although it is undoubtedly "moins un monde qu'une atmosphère de monde" (Dufrenne), a work of art is therefore atmospheric only because it selects, focuses, and usually enhances what already happens in our involuntary life experience (a trend that, although based on a different theoretical background, is now developed by what is known as "everyday aesthetics").[12]

3. Is Art a Safe "Cultivation" of Atmospheric Feelings?

To put the same concept in a different way, for pathic and atmospherological aesthetics, the experience of art is simply one of the most important ways to make our usually turbulent emotional life acceptable and thus manageable. At the very least, it is the historically specific way in which Europeans, wishing to produce not only instrumental objects but also experiences exempt from pragmatic urgency (which are thus raised to symbols of freedom and sacredness), sought a kind of "feeling of proof" (Böhme 1989, 153). This less emphatically idealistic definition of art translates into several suggestions.

The most obvious one is that we should rethink in atmospheric terms not only the general palette of feelings (abjectness, serenity, solemnity, oppression, power, sacredness, ambiguity, fear, and so forth) but also the main notions of classical aesthetics (beauty, grace, the sublime, the

[12] "A seductive atmosphere in a museum seduces us precisely as a seductive atmosphere would do elsewhere, and if it does not seduce us, it is because it is no longer a seductive atmosphere" (Hauskeller 2002, 180).

picturesque). Indeed, we should possibly see aura as "the characterless, or atmosphere *in general*" (Böhme 2017b, 24), thus undermining the traditional hegemony of "beauty," which is nothing but "the atmosphere of an evident presence that attracts us and increases our vital feeling" (Böhme 2006, 20). Atmospherically transfigured this way, the categories of traditional aesthetics finally lose their suffocating (and merely presumed) "differentiation" from everyday life and their far-too-abstract "transcendental" role and return to be expressive qualities or affordances radiated by reality or intentionally generated by an "aesthetic work" (Böhme 2001).

However, the "atmospheric turn"—the recent adoption in the humanities of a paradigm that prioritizes affective-emotional aspects over cognitive-reflective ones—demands more than just a new and expanded aesthetical lexicon. It is worth going well beyond Schmitz's traditional conception of aesthetics as a philosophy of art and applying to aesthetic-artistic experience what he specifically claims on dwelling, the garden, and teahouse culture (Griffero 2024b). In this sense, an artwork is a form of domestication and "cultivation" of atmospheres in a controllable space—atmospheres being feelings that, whether natural or artificial, are felt as spread in our "surroundings." These atmospheres can rarely be transformed at will—especially when they are what I call "prototypical," namely objective, external, unintentional atmospheres antagonistic to the percipient's state of mind and, indeed, totally irreducible to their subjective associationist-projective process and their attempts at resistance.

Whether we fully indulge in feeling an atmosphere, whether we react to it critically or escape from it (even in a spatial sense) depending on our felt-bodily disposition, atmospheres remain quasi-objective. They are capable of imbuing a situation with a chaotic and vague halo that, albeit irreducible to discrete or linguistic elements, in the case of art forces the experiencer to assume a half-devotional "distance" and maintain their own composure or disposition (*Fassung*). By culturally reworking the centripetal and felt-bodily aggressiveness typical of intrusive spatial feelings, the atmospheres of artworks are somewhat akin to the humbleness called for by a church, thus re-proposing (in a mitigated and controlled form) the *mysterium tremendum et fascinosum* of the holy as the numinous (Otto 1936)—or at least the official decorum required by any institutional public occurrence. It follows that artistic forms really serve as "bait" to evoke and capture atmospheres that are otherwise refractory, if not destructive. Even if "tamed," the power of such atmospheres yields an authority (Griffero 2014b) that is frankly irreducible to the psycho-gymnastic, overly intellectualistic and disciplined dimension described by Kant as a "disinterested" free play of the faculties (intellect and imagination).

Atmospheric perception in everyday life is obviously different from that found in the experience of art. Let me give a few examples. An atmosphere of severe sadness in someone normally arouses a feeling of respect in others, whereas a euphoric atmosphere infects and draws in even the most reserved people. Instead, the centripetal atmosphere of shame generates anguish in those who are responsible for it—and even in those who are innocent spectators, as in the

intriguing case of vicarious shame (Griffero 2017, 79–92). Finally, as we'll see, the atmosphere of injustice demands a kind of direct (or legal) retaliation by those who suffer it. Regardless of the kind of atmosphere, this affective authority acquires a mitigated and contemplative form in art—as in Rilke's famous injunction to "change your life" in *Archaic Torso of Apollo*. An artwork's affordances, in fact, never reach the point of an entirely irrational and ruinous rapture. After all, not even the avant-garde metamorphosis of life into a total work of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) occurs without being artistically manageable. Even in that case, the "regression" to a "primitive presence/present" that art sometimes arouses—which, according to New Phenomenology (Schmitz from 1964 on; most recently 2017), by deeply grasping the individual, demonstrates an identity of the person that is not purely formal (self-attributive) but radically subjective-pre-reflective (as affective and felt-bodily)—is nothing but a transitory phase of the unavoidable "personal emancipation" of the observer from the artwork, involving at least a semi-reflective distancing from the involving presence/present.

Just like other privileged affective experiences (first and foremost dwelling), art always requires that the experiencer can be influenced by surrounding atmospheric impressions and the meaningful things in which the latter might be condensed. It also requires the ability to ask "how one feels"— this is the general meaning of Heidegger's *Befindlichkeit*—in the co-presence of the person (understood in the "pathic" dative rather than the "active" nominative) and the situational space they inhabit, but without ever sinking into it to the point of complete subjugation. The balance thus achieved is the result of a fortunate felt-bodily alternation between the two guiding impulses of the felt-bodily dynamics proposed by Schmitz (contraction and expansion), that is, the well-known state of immersion and re-emersion that characterizes every artistic cathartic condition. Atmospherically speaking, being aesthetically (re)educated might mean being able to stay in the "in-between" (*das Zwischen*) in the right way. This pathic zone, preliminary to any rigid differentiation between a subjective and an objective pole, is yet to receive adequate philosophical and aesthetical analysis.

This "in-between," moreover, should also be explained from a felt-bodily (*leiblich*) point of view, starting from the issue of how to "deal" with atmospheres with the necessary competence on the operative-creative as well the receptive-perceptive plane. According to this "atmospheric competence" (Griffero 2020c, 88–96; 2021, 96–103), which I cannot go deeper into here, a pathic (atmospherological and neo-phenomenological) aesthetics can play two roles. First, it can become a practice to learn "how to expose oneself" (Böhme 1994, 189) and how to "suffer" (without any "doloristic" inclination, of course) what happens, especially in the case of unexpected events. In this way, a pathic aesthetics can also help show that usually everyday life is affectively related not with the "I," a concept that has been pathologically overestimated by Modernity, but with a "me" (hence the onto- and chronological primacy of mineness, (*Meinheit*). This "me" precedes any egological solidification (Böhme 2001, 123ff.; 2012, 11–54; Wiesing

2014) and can be said to be "sovereign" and "adult" rather than "autonomous" (as post-Enlightenment rationalism would have it) without having to neurotically remove any negative thing that may happen to it. Secondly, atmospheric competence can become a critical strategy. In fact, even though only an expert in curated appearance (for commercial, political purposes, etc.) can resist being completely overwhelmed by the atmospheres they experience, we can all learn, at least to an extent, how to avoid the most alienating and manipulative atmospheres and eventually manage to distance ourselves from them after the initial emotional involvement. Nevertheless, one must emphasize the importance of the ability to live with emotional and immediate involvement, especially against the prejudice of the full autonomy of the subject. Our paranoidly rationalistic culture often considers this involvement an occult and alienating mediation, rather than an emancipatory opportunity.

The experience of art as safe spatial cultivation of atmospheres can significantly contribute to this pathic emancipation. Such an experience must involve a "serious" feeling of devotion that resonates as a qualitatively specific interaction between contraction and expansion, as well as between personal regression and personal emancipation (following Schmitz's systematic felt-bodily economy, which he curiously does not apply to art) (Schmitz 1969; more recently 2011, 15–27, 71–87; Griffero 2024a, 111–29). It cannot be reduced to aesthetic pleasure, which mistakenly believes it can compensate for the modern lack of rootedness in the world through arbitrary imaginative fictions, whose aim is generally and predominantly the production of a state of pleasure—one that is, in fact, mistakenly conflated (in part due to the manipulative processes inherent to the cultural industry) with a genuine and profound attunement to the phenomenal world. The resulting unstable synthesis between primitive presence and unfolded presence reveals here its full atmospheric centrality, giving the personally emancipated experiencer the opportunity to live a "rich, colorful abundance of tender and magnificent feelings…, but on the other hand [to secure themselves] against the possibility … of being completely submerged in these feelings and being unreservedly exposed to their gripping and commanding power" (Schmitz 1977, 644). The "aesthetic" affective involvement, analogous to the feelings and ethical norms Schmitz calls "aesthetoid" as they "are binding through conditional seriousness," (Schmitz 2012, 188; see also, 2007, 85–86), is thus a kind of "happy middle ground." Through it, one can experience the full range of (even competing) atmospheric powers without ever being subordinated to them to the point of losing one's detachment and subjective self-awareness. This balance between emotional involvement and reflective distance helps to avoid the extremes of affective collapse (the loss of the personal dimension) and overly abstract distance (the loss of absolute subjectivity).

Having said that art is the safe cultivation of atmospheres, one must wonder whether a work of art can generate them or is merely the phenomenal occasion of their manifestation. It certainly evokes and embodies them, sometimes even controlling them. However, does it do so

just as any other object that "attracts" atmospheres and condenses them into itself? The uncertainty of the issue is partly removed as soon as one emphasizes what art, including contemporary provocatory art, has in common with the harmonious culture of feeling that can be summed up as "feeling at home," and is experienced when dwelling in a protected space. For Schmitz (unlike Böhme, who considers the existence of veritable "atmospheric generators"),[13] only in places like gardens, churches, tea houses, and one's home can one intentionally produce these attenuated atmospheres, whereas politicians, advertisers, interior designers, etc., can only manipulate feelings through impressions (propaganda). This difference can be easily explained through the neo-phenomenological principle that believing everything, including affective life, can be produced is just an illusion. This claim further implies the erroneous dualistic model of communication and the equally mistaken idea that atmospheres can emanate from single things rather than occasionally condensing into them.

For Schmitz, therefore, a deliberately created atmosphere is inauthentic. It is only a "poster situation" (*Plakat-Situation*), "the contraction of a segmented situation [a situation only accessible in excerpts, e.g. language] into an impression, that is, into a situation that comes to light in its entirety in an instant" (Schmitz 1996, 477). But why? After all, the "contraction" is an axiologically neutral process during which, to use the terminology of Gestalt theory, a figure detaches itself from its background through a specific affective coloring or, in other words, a leading impression condenses a broader meaning. Nevertheless, according to Schmitz, when a current situation propagates into a state-like one or, to put it differently, an impressive situation manages to posterize a segmented one,[14] engendering a "dangerous" poster situation that (being reductive and fatally propagandistic) differs widely from the inherently "innocent" posterized situation, the impression technique always ends up being deceptive (Schmitz 2003, 249). However, this is a truth requirement in the sense of an indeterminate *adaequatio* that contradicts the often-invoked phenomenological descriptivism and is, after all, insufficient for the first-person affective dimension postulated by New Phenomenology.

This manipulative deception, which Schmitz perhaps overemphasizes while acknowledging elsewhere that the first impression "can be tested, corrected, and improved" (Schmitz 1999, 25), can take the form of a poster truth. This also includes the dogmatic truth by which Heidegger unified the segmented situation of the people in a defined condensation area (understood as an unexplained impression). Initially, he did so from a National Socialist perspective by seeing in *Führer* a poster of a common situation. Later, but no less deceptively, he

[13] On the contrast between the belief that atmospheres can "also" be intentionally generated, at least in terms of their condition of possibility (Böhme), and the stance that excludes this possibility (Schmitz), see Schmitz (1998; 2023, 123–37) and Griffero (2021, 98–101).

[14] In ancient times, this also applied to gods, who were seen as "posters" of more diffused divine emotional atmospheres (see also, Lauterbach 2014, 565–84).

did so again in works of art (especially poetry)[15] defined as a setting up of "the" world—as if there were only "one" world for a particular historical people and as if a work of art could not speak to worlds of later ages (Schmitz 1996, 501).

Briefly, for Schmitz the deception created by poster situations should be mainly attributed to the "impression technique" used in the present age, which is fundamentally atomistic and lacks a real *nomos* (Schmitz 1999, 242–45, 335–40). Our era is dominated by an ill-guided autistic attempt to "conjure up" state-like situations for essentially political-propagandistic and/or economic purposes.[16] This trend began with French post-revolutionary festivals and was taken to extremes by Hitler's nationalist festive culture,[17] for the political purpose of providing a *nomos* as a way out of individual insecurity and isolation as well as social flattening, only to be later perfected for economic purposes in modern advertising. Worse still is today's widespread tendency to influence people's aspirations and produce an "attempt at integration" that is inevitably "propagandistic" (in the broadest sense) and manipulative. This is especially the case when the poster does not refer to "an already existing, state-like, segmented situation, but [is] a preliminary poster that first ignites and then manages the latter," targeting a public reduced to a "passive disposable mass" (335, 338).

But how would Schmitz respond to the objection that the impressive poster situations (artistic and nonartistic) are not necessarily manipulative, not to mention the vagueness of a term like *manipulation*[18] or the uncertainty of how, when, and why one situation succeeds in posterizing another? And how would he respond to the objection that poster situations still express an atmospheric experience as a first and involuntary impression, aligning with the noble rhetorical proto aesthetics that Schmitz himself claims to be close to (Schmitz 1995, 10)? "Perhaps" he would insist that the impression technique is manipulative because it is unable to visualize "the common responsible implanting situation that determines culture" and the "normative measures of its culture—also as a culture of protest" (Schmitz 2003, 259).[19] Furthermore, he could add that, as the impression technique can arbitrarily orient itself toward diverse goals, it ends up being dangerous or, in any case, less serious than the ancient "healing

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[15] Unlike the prosaically explicative decomposition of a situation, Schmitz considers the poetic explication more atmospheric, even though it is also almost fatally inclined toward posterization.

[16] The deception would arise "from the need to cover up through a short-breathed barrage of impressive, current situations the increasing decomposition of common, responsible, implanting situations [i.e., situations that take deep and lasting root] due to such driving forces as the rationalization of living together and the isolating autonomization of the individual through the spirit of liberal democracy" (Schmitz 1998, 182).

[17] One of its instruments was the "achieved enclosure against the … outside," symbolically realized in the artificial dome of light designed by Albert Speer (Schmitz 1999, 339, 335).

[18] For further objections (that cannot be repeated here) to the hasty use of the term *manipulation*, see Griffero (2020c).

[19] From the norms and roots of a personal situation, one "cannot be torn out easily and, if at all, only gradually and with considerable wounds" (Schmitz 1999, 24).

[from] and purification" (260) of affects that has always been sought through (good) rhetoric and the cultivation of feelings in an enclosed space.

The criteria for the aesthetic culture (in the original sense of cultivation) of atmospheres therefore are: (a) its ability to generate situations that, even though conflictual (Schmitz 1999, 30f.), are "seriously" implanting and not ephemeral—these situations not only lead to superficially nibbling on "state-like situations into which the recipient occasionally plunges up to the tip of his nose like the bow of a boat in a swell, only to quickly turn somewhere else again" (Schmitz 2003, 260); (b) its ability to create situations with a wide margin of involuntariness, whose probable personal imprint cannot be reduced to the outpouring-projecting into space of the private soul (Schmitz 1977, 305); and (c) its ability to create situations by extracting certain elements from a whole that is already "in the air" (303), without aiming at specific manipulative emotional details and their systematic combination.

Nevertheless, treating superficiality, transience, propagandistic-commercial purposes, and the deliberate planning of atmospheric effects (all characteristic of the aestheticization of everyday life) as "distortions"[20] leaves some questions unanswered. For example, it does not explain (normative aspect) whether the atmospheres thus evoked are (a) non-atmospheres, (b) false atmospheres, or simply (c) manipulated atmospheres. The criticism brought forward by Schmitz and others consists in claiming that planned situations cannot be called atmospheric in the proper sense—which, however, means denying the omnipresence of atmospheres posited elsewhere (Schmitz 2007, 84). It is perhaps better to simply concede, thereby overcoming the tension between phenomenological descriptivism and Schmitz's idiosyncratic cultural-critical diagnosis, that planned atmospheric situations produce an artificial atmosphericity or an atmosphere of alienness (Schmitz 1977, 267), provided that situations completely devoid of atmosphere do not exist.

Schmitz's theory is rightly suspicious toward the supposed omnipotence of practice and the populist "hygiene of mood" (Bollnow 1956). It therefore tries not to confuse the philosophical-existential centrality of feelings with mere sentimentalism, thus protecting the transcendent, pre-posterized, and non-"projective" dimension of true atmospheric feelings. Nevertheless, it lacks a "normative" reflection that could explain when and why an implanting situation is healthy or pathological (aren't they perhaps also implanting the situations created by authoritarian regimes?). In this regard, it could offer more—and better—insight than the all-too-common "cultivated balance of self-assertion and solidarity" (Lauterbach 2014, 474).

[20] For an approach that excludes the conscious design of atmospheres, their direct and even indirect producibility, see also, Begout (2020): in his view, *ambiance* is too fleeting, *mersif et enveloppant*, as well as authoritarian (and therefore passively perceived) for individuals to be able to dispose of it at will.

Now, rather than further emphasizing this point (art as the cultivation of atmospheres), it is worth underlining the neo-phenomenological project of a bodily hermeneutics of art.[21] This approach relates to art and culture in general, understood as a lifestyle (Erich Rothacker), not to a mental-spiritual act or to some technical innovation but to a felt-bodily disposition that is potentially as collective as the atmospheric feelings it engenders. According to this perspective, the felt-bodily disposition (not necessarily conscious and always historically changing) explains both the aesthetic experience of the perceiver and the evolution of artistic styles better than traditional intellectual and social history. The condition of possibility of this felt-bodily hermeneutics (or ekphrasis) lies in the fact that, far from being inner states,

> atmospheres of feeling … [as quasi-things] are sensed in one's own felt body, but not as emanating from it, but as something that happens to it or surrounds it is in a certain sense…; thanks to felt-bodily communication … they are also perceived in encountered objects, comparable in this respect to other quasi-things. (Schmitz 1998, 189–90)

The predictable objection of determinism seems to be partially averted by the specification that individuals always selectively stylize what is climatically and culturally possible. In addition, the history of atmospheres does not seem to be subject to any law of uniformity (Schmitz 2021, 284), so that each gesture (whether artistic and not) is the result (a sort of *Zeitleib*) of specific combinations of felt-bodily dispositions among many possible ones.

This hypothesis has the merit of transforming beauty from a transcendent gift into a historically conditioned solution to the conflicts among a finite number of felt-bodily variables—although the predominance of a particular disposition within a style by no means excludes the significant role of subordinate dispositions. Unfortunately, it faces challenges both in explaining the differences in quality and rank among epochs and aesthetic objects, and in establishing the beginning and end of various stylistic periods. Still, this yet unexplored program is certainly worth pursuing, if it remains free from the biases of individual taste,[22] acknowledges the polyphonic nature of felt-bodily dispositions within an age,[23] and recognizes that the disposition

[21] "For works of art, and more generally for aesthetic entities, felt-bodiliness only [holds] meaning as something seized by atmospheric feelings" (Schmitz 1977, 631).

[22] For Schmitz, for example, abstraction cannot carry the significant atmospheric-situational halo of figurative works of art (Schmitz 1977, 615): in his view, only "absolute music" is "charged with powerful, albeit nameless atmospheres" (Schmitz 2007, 83).

[23] "In which all categories of felt-bodiliness are contained, albeit with different and changing emphasis, and act on each other in order to attune themselves to an unstable equilibrium" (Schmitz 1966, 265).

of a given epoch or culture can be deciphered and also find resonance in another epoch or culture.[24]

4. From Art to Law as an Atmosphere

In addition to all of the above—redefining the role of aesthetics and art within a phenomenology of involuntary life experiences, critically considering traditional explanations of the relationship between atmospheres and works of art, and attempting to view aesthetic experience not as intentional creations but as the engaging cultivation of powerful atmospheres[25] from a distance and in a safe space—there is a particularly risky and provocative hypothesis. This view posits that there are phenomenal commonalities between art and law, especially when the latter is considered free from unemotional-formal and divine and/or natural axiology. However, it also distances itself from theories of the nomosphere as a community's self-immunization through dramatized legal atmospheres (nomotope) (Sloterdijk 2016, 436–65), or of the law as a spatial institutional atmosphere (lawscape) that stages itself like any other commodity that dominates public life and preserves the status quo (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2015).

Developing some neo-phenomenological ideas[26] in a highly flexible manner, it can instead be argued that both art and law, in their anthropological grounding, start from a binding validity that is beyond doubt. Accordingly, law is an authoritarian atmosphere even before its social enactment, if we (re)discover the affective roots of justice—the power that grips those who are affectively touched by the experience of right and wrong. This power alone prevents the conviction of being right (or not) from being a mere convention and gives it a "nimbus of legitimacy" (Schmitz 2012, 42) irreducible to the coherentism-consensualism of "rational dialogue" and the so-called best argument. A feeling—especially as a prototypical atmosphere[27]—has validity when one is ready to obey it or, at least, feels unable to escape it at will and/or experiences a transformation in one's affective attitude. Its authority, in fact, imposes itself with more-than-epistemological "evidence" that is the essence of any first personal and felt-bodily "subjective fact"—characterized by an inherently first-person experience, one that

[24] Who can rule out, for example, that which Winckelmann interpreted as "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" could (a) have meant something entirely different to the Greeks themselves and (b) convey something different to today's experiencer, perhaps even arrogance and agonal tension?

[25] Whose "friendliness can turn into hostility at any moment" (Klages 1929–1932, 1404).

[26] See, for example, Schmitz's answers in Werhahn (2010, 129–40).

[27] According to my (ontologically inflationary) typology (first developed in Griffero 2014a, 144ff.), atmospheres can be categorized as follows: (a) prototypical, that is, objective, external, unintentional atmospheres that sometimes lack a precise name and relate to vastness; (b) derivative-relational, i.e., objective, external, intentionally produced atmospheres that relate to a directional space and imply an "in-between" between subject and object; and (c) quite spurious, i.e., subjective, projective atmospheres that can even be related to single objects and local spaces.

can be authentically articulated solely by those who are directly involved—and, therefore, cannot be circumvented by the doubts engendered by a higher level of "personal emancipation" (as a more cognitive-reflective stage).

According to this pathic idea of law, the core juridical authority lies in anger and shame: these affects, without physical constraints, inhibit any critical distance in those who feel them, especially if unexpectedly. In this context, something "appears" indisputably just or unjust, similarly to when something is perceived with inexplicable confidence as beautiful or ugly in aesthetic experience. Because we cannot live without norms, or better, in situations containing programs that, like norms, promote our possible obedience, in both cases (beauty/ugliness and justice/injustice) the certainty of being right arises from being grasped by feelings and subjective facts that are largely irreducible, respectively, to conventional recipes (art world) or rules (justice system).

Without this pathic cornerstone of justice, which appeals neither to metaphysics (values, nature, God) nor to procedural discursive reason but to the original feeling of what is right, norms would be indifferent and arbitrary or, at best, deprived of real "effectiveness." The feeling of evident injustice experienced in the presence of intolerable facts (such as a child clearly aware of being unjustly accused) calls for reparation and respectively arouses (or at least should arouse!) anger in the victims and shame in those responsible. These two feelings are atmospheric precisely because they are not private properties of the subject but are spatially widespread, intersubjectively shared and authoritatively felt. After all, without intolerable anger and shame, abuse, even if judged to be wrong, would be as little punishable as an illness or a flood (Schmitz 2012, 60–61).

The feeling that something is unbearable, sometimes as offensive not to someone but to a respected shared value or *nomos*—for example, anger at (and shame of) those who butcher a musical masterpiece—is atmospherically detached from the legislator's will. According to Schmitz's Gestaltic downplaying reinterpretation of phenomenological "intentionality," this feeling, without being a defined intentional pole, is distributed between what generates shame or anger (the anchor point) and the space in which these feelings manifest (the condensation zone). These emotions are later processed and developed in various ways. For example, in pre-legal cultures, anger leads to revenge, which in turn generates new anger. Instead, shame engenders the annihilation of self-esteem, sometimes (especially in archaic cultures) leading to extreme actions like suicide or hara-kiri. There can also be an effective interplay between these emotions, such as when anger toward the guilty is tempered by the shame felt by the offender, or when one reacts to unmanageable shame with anger (this is the case with the duel, be it real or metaphorical).

Although in the "extroverted" European law anger is necessarily followed by punishment or compensation, and in the "introverted" Far East law shame is addressed with ritualized forms

of rehabilitative self-punishment, neither feeling as such would generate a legal situation. This is because revenge might generate new anger, and shame might elicit pity for those who feel it, thus preventing its real cathartic venting. So, anger and shame must be accompanied by a kind of pre-legal presentiment—a respect for what is being violated—that anticipates the threat they pose and knows how to avoid it without focusing solely on the anchor point (something) and/or the condensation zone (somebody).

This Schmitzian reflection on the law brings me to another unexpected analogy between law and aesthetics. This juridical presentiment, in fact, bears more than one resemblance to aesthetic "taste": just as the presentiment of right and wrong can tactfully "play" with the cathartic feelings of anger and shame and ultimately transcend them thanks to a successful legal framework (and its unofficial corollaries such as etiquette, politeness, etc.), so too does the aesthetic presentiment by inducing the creative management of danger (the atmospheric violence of certain feelings) through a stylistic-formal process. This initial sensation, aimed at avoiding injustice (legally) and ugliness (aesthetically), then develops beyond its alleged subjectivity to the point of creating, respectively, a juridical community and an aesthetic community, each grounded in their distinctive institutions.

In this context, the complex interplay between anger and shame, regardless of their anchoring points (which are partly culturally and historically variable), is ontogenetically prior to any arbitrariness or convention, and the resulting legal presentiment represents a profound sensitivity to forms of life that can be (or not be) tolerated. A legal situation thus becomes precisely the collection of strategies (legislation) designed to cultivate, in a progressively safe manner, the affective constellation involving anger and shame.

Importantly, however, feelings sometimes wield absolute authority, against which resistance is futile, and at other times, they possess only relative authority, which one can resist by appealing to a higher level of personal emancipation. In the case of shame, for instance, one might feel superior to the conventions whose violation induces shame, whereas in the case of anger, one could consider the offender's (at least partial) unawareness and the cultural conditioning as attenuating factors that downplay the severity of the injustice committed. However, the biographically and subjectively different resonance—shaped by felt-bodily filtering—does not imply that the atmospheres triggering these feelings are entirely subjective. Just as Italian, spoken differently by different Italians, does not render the Italian language a wholly subjective phenomenon, aesthetic sensitivity similarly operates on a level in which a "type" of beautiful and sunny atmosphere, due to its beauty and welcoming irradiation, can unexpectedly intensify the observer's sadness. This does not occur because the landscape or day itself is sad, but because the pleasant view and sunshine are perceived by them as foreign and deeply irritating at that moment (Griffero 2021, 63–66). As a result, we encounter two levels of atmospheric binding power, which also explain, among other more problematic things, the

paradoxical conception of the museum as both de-auratizing (transforming the originally religious authority into "merely" artistic authority) and auratizing (imbuing banal useful objects with aesthetic value and authority).

Indeed, the atmospheric analogies I have posited between law and aesthetics do not end here. Just as a rule that binds a central group can also be enforced on those who gave no value to that rule at first, an aesthetic judgment considered correct within the narrow circle of the art world can also claim or hope to impose itself on an external group. Nevertheless, just as a legal community only requires compliance with the most basic rules, an aesthetic community circumscribes the scope of agreement to works of less controversial value, leaving full freedom of interpretation and judgment for the most innovative and provocative pieces. Accordingly, just as the set of unconditionally binding rules forms a legal culture, so the set of aesthetic values upheld within a specific artistic circle can give rise to a global aesthetic culture and tradition. Obviously, both cultures or forms of cultivation of atmospheric feelings are always subject to gradual revision and adaptation through new experiences and interpretations, albeit to different degrees.

The analogy between the art world and the legal world also involves the way in which both "purify" the initial emotional turmoil on which they depend—which is non-cathartic in art and self-cathartic in law.[28] This results in solutions that we could define as cathartic. In the legal realm, this is seen in the trial as well as in forgiveness—provided that the damage suffered and the guiltiness of the person responsible are taken seriously—understood as purification of the otherwise uncontrollable atmospheric anger (legal peace). In the artistic realm, this is found in the success of a performance or exhibition, which serves as a test for critics and audiences of performances whose provocative and irritating originality might initially arouse anger and/or shame, particularly in avant-garde art. Indeed, the trial or forgiveness on the one hand and the artistic exhibition-performance on the other—more precisely the transition from exhibition-publication-execution to the critical debate and probable popular success—are nothing but rites of passage. They are aimed at ensuring the successful transition from the threatening and at times unsustainable initial atmosphere (the guilt ascertained in the trial and the aesthetic astonishment in the art experience) to the more appeased atmosphere permeating juridical and aesthetic consensus. Nevertheless, both procedural truth-based legal peace and critical acclaim take on

[28] According to Schmitz, the process of aesthetic purification, the various phases of which could be analyzed by the aesthetics of the artwork and reception aesthetics (exhibition/publication/execution and critical debate/popular success), is limited in terms of aesthetics of effect. He focuses only on how acutely narrowing-oppressive felt-bodily emotions (such as grief, fear, and lamentation) are overcome in tragic poetry (Schmitz 1977, 588). Self-cathartic emotions such as anger (whose catharsis occurs in the act of revenge) and shame (whose catharsis lies in a loss of self-esteem that goes up to the self-destruction of the shamed person) become truly cathartic only within the juridical experience.

evidence—a feeling of being right compared to deviant behavior or a challenge to shared taste—that is almost never affectively satisfactory to the popular need for absolute norms.

5. There Can Be No Michael Kohlhaas in Aesthetics

Although the risky analogies between aesthetics and law as cathartic control spheres of initially unbearable atmospheres seem at least plausible, it is certainly difficult to imagine the existence of Michael Kohlhaas in aesthetics. In fact, although the famous character created by Kleist seeks personal justice at any cost (even in defiance of the general law), it is hard to imagine the same ardor in the sphere of aesthetics. The only possible exception might be the *cupio dissolvi* of late nineteenth-century art-for-art's-sake aestheticism. This hypothetical individual would live by an aesthetic norm whose evidence is as binding as the absolute need for justice and would therefore authoritatively "demand" the consent of all those who feel differently. It would not be enough for them to merely disapprove and invite dissenting voices to experience this evidence in the first person, possibly accepting the disagreement. Nevertheless, as indicated by both the Kantian appeal to the subjective universality of taste judgment and beauty and especially Bourdieu's analysis of the always violent and segregating feeling of "distinction," aesthetic taste does justify—if not a "legal" condemnation of the disagreement or anger toward those who disagree—a sociocultural stigma that is far from superficial tolerance and mercy.

As seen so far, the beauty and the right radiate an atmosphere that involves the experiencer while also establishing a sense of distance. This atmosphere attunes the space the person enters, while also being influenced by their specific perspective and level of personal emancipation, which affects their way of feeling. As already mentioned, however, shame/anger and beauty/ugliness do not always compel, respectively, irrevocable ethical consent or uncritical-absorbing aesthetic pleasure. The authority of such atmospheres can be disregarded if, for instance, the person considers their infringement too irrelevant to warrant reproach or sees their attraction to bad taste a sophisticated reaction to petty bourgeois hypercorrection or "artistic correctness." The powerful affective authority does not always prevail over the idea that the injustice committed is not serious or that bad taste does not deserve disapproval.

In any case, a neo-phenomenological and pathic aesthetics cannot be fully satisfied with emphasizing, as has been the case so far, that art (aesthetic pleasure) and law (feeling of justice) generate a similar state of "luck mediety" between two extreme poles. These are, on the one hand, the emotional shipwreck due to full emotional passivity and, on the other, the hyper-rationalization of the existence required by an obsessive and "resentful" (in the Nietzschean sense) control of the emotional sphere aimed at achieving ataraxia and rational autonomy.

In fact, such aesthetics also aims at

(a) rehabilitating perceptual intelligence more generally. It seeks to view art as a qualitatively enhanced form of non-lab-experiential perception that interacts with phenomena (people, things, *qualia*) and especially quasi-things in a felt-bodily and even sporadic manner, indifferent to the reistic dogma that stigmatizes the ephemeral.

(b) Furthermore, it addresses situations in which human beings "cultivate" atmospheric feelings in a protected space—the goal being not to control these feelings' fascinating authority, but to experience them from a distance, without the risk of facing the violence they exude in the real world. In addition to this, it should also train us to simply tune into these feelings (positively or negatively, actively, but also contemplatively), and to critically develop the atmospheric "competence" that protects us from being manipulated.

(c) Finally, this aesthetics should especially focus on the felt-bodily experience of resonance that shapes our being-in-the-world. This resonance is a reaction to the power of atmospheric feelings, resulting, as has already been mentioned, in a balance between, on the one hand, personal regression into the "primitive present-presence" (absolute subjectivity) and, on the other hand, the personal emancipation needed to detach oneself from overly threatening affects.

Quite obviously, a neo-phenomenological and pathic aesthetics of this kind, as anti-intentionalist and anti-egological as possible, is today only a work in progress. The emancipatory balance between the active-autonomous subject and the pathic-sovereign subject may be, for now, just a "regulative principle." However, this is not just a formal "ought-to-be," as the aforementioned "aesthetoid norms" deeply involve our experience even without relying on logical rules. They require "cultivating" atmospheric feelings from a distance, allowing us to enjoy their "powers"—which are, after all, what gives meaning and relevance to our existence—without making us headless and manipulable "passengers of atmospheres" (Soentgen 1998, 117).

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