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Atmospheres and felt-bodily resonances

My path started from an ontological aesthetics of atmospheres – understood as emotional powers and feelings widespread in predimensional spaces – and arrived at an ontology of quasi-things (Griffero 2010, 2013, 2014a), conceived as half-entities that, for their intrusive expressiveness, affect us like partners. The frame of reference of this journey can be found not only in Hermann Schmitz's neophenomenology but also in my less ambitious project of a "pathic aesthetics" (Griffero 2016). The practicability of the latter, though, entirely depends on our ability to welcome what "happens to us" whether we like it or not, thus resisting the temptation to transform the "given" into something "done" (Böhme 2003, 2008).

The core of this pathic orientation is always the affective involvement. But this self-affection necessarily concerns the body, something we are daily responsible for – even more so when, like today, it is subject to (and threatened by) countless modifications and technological prostheses. Both the theory of atmospheres and that of quasi-things thus presuppose an adequate investigation of human felt-bodily way of life. My point is this: what is the relationship between atmospheres and the body? And above all, what kind of body is really their sounding board?

1. *What is this thing called (felt) body?*

The question "why the philosophy of body was not considered an academic discipline in the same way as the philosophy of mind, language, or art" (Csepregi 2006: 1) is absolutely legitimate, but it doesn't necessarily establish the need for other alleged cultural "turns"¹, which are in fact undermined by their very inflation. In order to react efficiently and effectively against the unworldly disembodiment typical of Western Modernity it's not enough to simply emphasize the "resurgence of the body" or to just repeat Nietzsche's catch-all mantra (Nietzsche 2001: 5) that "on a grand scale, philosophy has been no more than an interpretation of the body and a misunderstanding of the body". It's unclear, in fact, whether what's at issue here is the return of the *Körper*², with all its narcissistic and performative consequences, or that of the *Leib*, namely something that appears by its *lebensweltlich* naturalness askew to modern reductionism, suggesting a critical revision of the titanic civilizing Western process of dematerialization and repression of the felt body.

It is surely clear that today it makes no sense to speak of the body pretending to be an ancient Greek, for whom the name "Descartes" means nothing at all and people are nothing more than "vessels" of transpersonal powers. Like human perception, also the body (generally considered) is in fact all but a natural invariance³ and

¹ One must not add the corporeal turn to the older linguistic one, nor to the more recent (and undoubtedly far less pervasive) iconic, spatial, medial and affective ones.

² See for example Kamper-Wulf 1982.

³ I agree with Fuchs 2000: 85.

even the felt-body, influencing our understanding of the world, silently affects our very understanding of the felt-body. Despite this caveat, that is an insuperable hermeneutic vicious circle, it is still justified – to a certain extent – to consider a *Leib*-Philosophy as a paradigm shift: one that recognizes that the felt body not only makes an active contribution to all phenomena but may also be a perfect seismograph of one's own emotional situation. However, first of all I have to bypass something that, so to speak, clips the wings of this approach: that is, the suggestive, yet exaggeratingly nihilist Frankfurtian view for which both the thematization and the improvement of the physical body would be nothing but the fascist exaltation of somatic functionality⁴. Nevertheless, this frightening and implicitly blackmailing warning concerns just the physical body and its performances, and not the felt body⁵. Indeed, it's no less "Frankfurtian" to note that precisely those who do not reduce a walk to mere movement, or a meal to mere calories – reducing the body to the dimension of measurement – are probably the ones who haven't lost their hope just yet. The lesson to be drawn from the Frankfurtian warning is therefore,

⁴ According to Adorno and Horkheimer "only culture treats the body as a thing that can be owned, only in culture has it been distinguished from mind [...] as the object, the dead thing, the corpus". But "it remains a cadaver, no matter how trained and fit it may be". The proof is that "those who extolled the body in Germany, the gymnasts and outdoor sports enthusiasts, always had an intimate affinity to killing, as nature lovers have to hunting. They see the body as a mobile mechanism, with its hinged links, the flesh upholstering the skeleton. They manipulate the body, actuating the limbs as if they were already severed [...]. Unaware, they measure the other with the eye of the coffin maker" (Horkheimer-Adorno 2002: 193-5).

⁵ Or *soma*, if we use the term preferred by Shusterman 2008: 1.

for me, not its radical somatophobia, but the need to put under the scrutiny of a critical theory the very difference between *Leib* and *Körper*, as well as the hypothesis of a felt-bodily resonance of atmospheric feelings.

In the Western world, the body has been freed from traditional forms of exploitation such as war and manual labour. However, it now appears to be obsessively bound to some technical-aesthetic principle of efficiency for which those who do not – or, better said, do not manage to – live up to the given standards (in sport, but also sex life, self-care and fitness) are stigmatized. We need to counterbalance this performative-narcissistic obsession with physical well-being, youthful appearance and the resulting triumphal march of bioengineering by understanding that the will to feel and to sense – even if it always were to imply in its normative value a somewhat nostalgic trace of the past – works as a providential compensation for the psychic health of our times. Indeed, this insistence on feeling and the sentient body compensates for a somatic culture where “what can (technically) be done, will sooner or later be done”, and the slogan “do something for your body” sounds very much like “do something for your car or your house” (Gahlings 2008: 271). In my view, the needed resurgence is that of the felt body: of what “within” the body is oriented towards the present and the future and cannot in any way be reduced to the crystallization of previous vital processes⁶. In this sense, even if physical corporeity

⁶ It's not so much the *Leib*, in fact, that is an already forgotten past but rather the *Körper* or (as Sartre would say) the *Leib*-for-me. It is an abstract body that somehow makes us simple tourists of the world,

works as a very current *mise-en-scene* aimed at self-stylization, it is fair to say that “to be a *Leib* is to become, to have a *Körper* is to have-been” (Fuchs 2013: 86)⁷.

Here I am neither specially concerned with the fact that cultural studies want to give up the anatomical-biological level in favour of the sociocultural one⁸, nor with the collapse of the disembodied conception of the mind (and even of the “brain in a vat”⁹) typical of classical cognitive sciences¹⁰. The transcendental-enactive role now generically ascribed to the body¹¹ – which risks simply replacing the Kantian ego¹², although in *statu na-*

spectators of what Straus (1935: 316-24) considered (also in a metaphorical way) as geography – only a degradation of landscape.

⁷ See also Fuchs 2000: 124.

⁸ Focusing the transition from sex to gender, for instance, they try to highlight the “pre-objective qualities” of the body that, *inter alia*, atmospherically pervade our entire existence (say, the male/female difference, like for Merleau-Ponty). See Waldenfels 2000: 332.

⁹ “The full and extraordinary support system that would be required to allow a brain-in-a-vat to experience things as we experience them, or in other words, to allow a brain-in-a-vat to be phenomenologically in-the-world and not just physically in-a-vat, would have to replicate the bodily system that already supports our ordinary existence” (Gallagher, Zahavi 2008: 131).

¹⁰ Their Platonic view disregards the role of the body in the development of cognition. The growing conception is now that the brain is structured and modelled by the body (not just in an anatomical sense), starting from the fruitful consequences of the erect position: mobility and freedom of the hands, distance and independence from anything, predominance of the sight and thus of foresight, etc.

¹¹ “The biological body (what it enables and excludes by means of its structure, basic posture, and motor capacity) is the body that shapes the way that we perceive and think about the world” (Gallagher, Zahavi 2008: 133).

¹² If it’s true (Marcel 197: 29) that within the body there is something problematic that can be investigated (*Körper*) and something metaphysical that in principle cannot (*Leib*), then we should leave the philosophical level.

scendi (Waldenfels 1985: 159) – should be attributed even more to a prereflective body (or body-subject). The latter “is not just a construct composed of limbs and organs¹³, an ensemble of sensations and movements, [but rather] a felt-body which got shaped in an historical sense, whose experiences got settled in its invisible dispositions” (Fuchs 2008: 57) and make contact with the world possible¹⁴. This in turn implies the exclusion of any view from nowhere as well as the recognition of atmospheres as embodied feelings (see Slaby 2014) that – more importantly – are not projected by us onto the external world.

However, my aim is not to describe again the limits of the naturalist view, possibly evoking some esoteric technique of bodily auscultation. Nor can I be satisfied with the cheap triumphal conclusion that we do not own, but rather we are our body. In fact, such commonplace contrast, by hinting at the somatic inflationism often wished for by every heterodox anti-dualistic enclave of Western epistemology (see Griffero 2003, 2006, 2009, 2011c, 2011d), merely settles for considering the body as a thing “of a particular type” (Husserl 1989: 165) or indulging in the supposed ineffabilism of life experiences. Provided that it is certainly difficult to represent, and a fortiori to define, the felt-body, starting from the fact that as

¹³ Also in Merleau-Ponty's view, the body – albeit open to the world – is still composed of organs.

¹⁴ Following Sartre, pure being-in should be mainly understood in a felt-bodily sense. Indeed, “feelings of the body and feelings towards objects in the world are” really “two sides of the same coin, although one side or the other will often occupy the experiential foreground” (Ratcliffe 2008: 111).

soon as I think of it I somewhat physically objectify it¹⁵, the first thing to do here is to avoid third-person theoretical-cognitive questions (“What is it?”) in favour of those about its agency (“What does it do?”, “How does it work?” and, above all, “What does it feel like to experience it?”)¹⁶. This more performative, or even “protreptical”, neophenomenologic approach to the body mainly addresses human involuntary experiences – that is, pre-conceptual, presemiotic and not-yet-interpreted actual felt-bodily feelings – while not neglecting our *habitus* (otherwise said, the style or melody which grounds the continuity of individuals and tacitly allows them to perform an action with grace by motor-figures in response to suggestions of things, quasi-things and environments)¹⁷. In other words, I want to avoid the risk to produce an unessential ontologization and a fatal reification¹⁸. To that effect, my approach neither uses too much the (yet indispensable) sociocultural “discursiveness” of the body (*à la* Foucault or Butler¹⁹) nor embraces the vir-

¹⁵ Fuchs (2000: 16) significantly defines this situation as a real hermeneutic circle.

¹⁶ See Böhme 2003: 9 and Waldenfels 2000: 42.

¹⁷ Csepregi 2006, especially 51 ff.

¹⁸ For some, this is linguistically unavoidable: “to feel our felt-body already entails the tendency to distance ourselves from it within our consciousness”; a fortiori, “the explicit linguistic articulation of the felt-body is [...] a product of its elimination, even in the case of its counterposition to it” (Böhme 2010: 112, 119). From this point of view the felt-body would be comprehensible only when practiced.

¹⁹ One of the radically historicizing consequences of this consists in seeing the *Leib* – in the framework of a basically permanent somatic element – as a destiny only in the past, while considering the *Körper* as something that, within the somatic element, has become (also technologically) manipulable. This is what Schürmann posited (2015: 29 ff.); however, while not intending to completely erase the (no

tual perspectives put forward by culturalist constructivism. Rather, it limits itself to addressing some (neo)phenomenological questions on the way in which the felt-body – as such, the “medium of the emotional life” (Böhme 2003: 130) – involves us and thus provides a self-experience. In its non-historicity²⁰ this self-experience is more authentic and certain than the one (*cogito*) provided by the (solely intellectual) Cartesian doubt²¹.

Phenomenology taught us we might see the body as a physical, tangible and measurable thing among the others (*Körper*), thus metaphysically and semantically presupposing a Cartesian dualism²² and a third-person perspective, be it scientific or commonsensical²³. Or, on the contrary, we might rather focus on the felt- or lived-body (*Leib*): something which is still invisible, thus enabling the emergence of everything else, and from which

matter how contingent) difference between naturalness as a passive principle and social interaction, he refuses the idea of freedom as a totally arbitrary situation.

²⁰ This self-experience must indeed necessarily be non-historical (at least relatively). Otherwise what would the relativist supporters of body history would make history of, if there weren't a *Leib* and a prehistoric feeling also able to go through evolution? (Thomas 1996: 29-30).

²¹ “I am already always in the world when I say ‘I’” (Waldenfels 2000: 306).

²² With the notorious theoretical (materialism, occasionalism, psychophysical parallelism, psychosomatics) and therapeutic (drugs and psych drugs abuse) consequences. Hence the plethora of artificial remedies (sleeping pills, laxatives, aphrodisiacs, painkillers, stimulants), which can force the body to do the things that, in its non-intentionality, it should be perfectly able to do by itself.

²³ For Sartre: the body-for-others insofar as it's known by the others, and the body-for-me insofar as it exists for the other, for example for a doctor who tries to define the pain I am feeling (Podlech 1956: 179-81).

we cannot distance ourselves, as it is being what we are and not something we have²⁴. This somewhat religious word – which refers to vital processes (*Leben-lip-Leib*) to which one abandons oneself and which for this reason, strictly speaking, one cannot “have” – was repressed by modern instrumental reason. This ostracism favoured the view that what is peculiar to humans would be located solely inside them and that the body is just a physical black box²⁵, analyzed in the absence of two crucial aspects (the involvement in situations and the qualitative character of experience).

Much ink has been spent on this vexed distinction, which still needs to be amended and made more precise.

1) First of all, a clear split between the alive and the dead/objectified must be avoided, because the physical body is alive too, as it entails a form of life (for instance, the nowadays privileged one of narcissism), while the lived-body in turn entails something that’s relatively objectual (otherwise, how could we develop a phenomenology out of it?).

2) Moreover, despite being tempting for every humanist who is a sworn enemy of physicalistic reification,

²⁴ It is precisely what, as an indefinable prior to the subject/object dualism, makes the instrumentalization of the body possible without being in turn an instrument (which would otherwise produce an infinite regression) (Marcel 1978: 22). *Leib* thus means the *lebensweltlich* and unobjectifiable subjectivity (Rappe 2012: 14, 17 ff., 69 ff.).

²⁵ Whose signals need to be immediately medicalized and manipulated insofar as they are (or rather, have become) unknown and no longer aligned with the dogma of efficiency. That is why it seems really strange for the Western *forma mentis* to hear that many Chinese people, despite being disabled, claim to be in good health! (Linck 2011: 76, 157).

this conceptual distinction fatally ends up, at best, practicing a scorch-earth policy to overcome all conceptual obstacles, and, at worst, repeating at the level of felt body and physical body that very dualism (body/soul) it wanted to avoid²⁶. The solution then is not to stiffen too much that distinction, rather seeing it as a genetic and lived process of sense (Staudigl 2012: 14) or, in other words, a lived experience whose range of possibilities relies in any case on a “compromise solution” “between” two poles – think of when a certain sting or heat, while not being traceable back to a specific organ, is still also a physical symptom that can be used for a proper diagnosis²⁷.

Instead of insisting on these somewhat abstract extremes and being forced to choose between the devil and the deep blue sea – that is, on the one side, something thetically not perceivable and acting only as a regulative idea²⁸ and, on the other side, something that is fully itself only when, like a corpse, can be dissected

²⁶ Soentgen 1998: 60 ff., Waldenfels 2000: 280, Blume, Demmerling 2007: 119-20.

²⁷ For Plügge (1967: 74-5, 78 ff.) the two poles are on the one hand the full identity among ego, *Leib* and *Körper* (this is the forward-looking and acting man) and on the other a *leiblich* ego no longer in agreement with one's *Körper*, until when – with the old age and especially with death – it gives way to the mere physical one. Schmitz first (Schmitz 1965: 54) admits the intermediate dimension/perspective of a *körperlicher Leib* and then (Schmitz 1999: 199) this notwithstanding, excludes its usefulness. On the lived-physical body as a hybrid within a range that starts from the pure *Leib*, passes through two schemata (the body-for-me and the body-for-science) and ends with the pure *Körper*, see Rappe 2012: 98 ff.

²⁸ Marion (2000: 99-124) defines it as a “flesh” that we received and that we fully identify with.

and thus gets back to things (Petzold 1985: 357)²⁹ – it would be better to replace the *aut-aut* model with that of “a transition point of both, a mutual entanglement” (Plügge 1967: 81). According to this pattern, at least in adult life, every time there is a partial coextension of the *Leib*-space and the *Körper*-space, not based on a causal or interactive relationship but rather on a (isomorphic-analogic) correspondence³⁰. However, there are also always two perspectives for the same entity (a sameness that must be considered *cum grano salis*, i.e. with respect only to a commonsensical body experience), which are mostly mutually exclusive like the bi-stable two-dimensional pictures. They depend on whether one is only an observer or is involved in it³¹. In other words, they depend on whether one – thanks to one’s personal emancipation – has to do with a sensible-visible body (*albeit still Leib-related*) and perhaps even with the abstract one, consisting of gathering only statistical physical-scientific data (Schmitz 2003: 410) , or whether, thanks to one’s occasional personal regression to absolute subjectivity, one has to do rather with one’s subjective felt-body³².

²⁹ That is the only way to say that, in contrast with the eminently lived *Leib*, the *Körper* (as a corpse) continues to exist for some time after death.

³⁰ “*Leib* and *Körper* correspond to each other through both their spatial-dynamic structure and their sense-directed and analogic one”, through a “morphic resonance” (Fuchs 2000: 143, 149).

³¹ But this only categorial distinction needs a kind of third category, for instance the person’s ex-centric positionality (Plessner), insofar as it is currently able to know and feel the difference *Leib-Körper*.

³² In this sense New Phenomenology overturns the traditional tendency to consider every kind of regression as a pejorative atavism.

2. *A landscape made of felt-bodily isles*

Yet such legitimate hermeneutical scepticism towards the dualistic-ontological shortcut, and the fact that only a good dialectic between the two forms of life (from the outside or from the inside), would be able to prevent psychopathological phenomena³³ as well as to allow for a (not heavily alienated) scientificity³⁴, should not become an alibi to ignore the difference. It's always necessary to distinguish between a third-person discourse on the thing-body, which gives priority to what got reified within the medical-naturalistic perspective (physiological, chemical, neuroscientific, and even genetic), and a first-person feeling of a subject-body, through whose enduring, intransitive and quasi-thingly background one may have an involving mood-experience of every quasi-thing, including something changing and transitive like atmospheres.

Here it will suffice to identify four particularly characteristic points.

1) First of all, the (quasi-thingly) and prereflective sphere of the felt-body is certainly extended in the predimensional and surfaceless space³⁵ – unlike the psyche –

³³ For instance those which may come along with one's bodily transformation during puberty, starting from the paranoid anguish of shame, as the reification and decentralization of one's own person, up to dysesthesia and, above all, dysmorphobia as an exaggerated perception of a certain portion of the physical body (something that is surgically incurable precisely because it's felt-bodily). A decentralization is however surely necessary for the development of rationality as much as the integration of the pathic with the gnostic.

³⁴ Since even mere measurement constantly presupposes the *lebensweltlich* bodiliness, as Husserl's *Krisis* notoriously shows.

³⁵ "Surfaces are unrelated to the felt-body; there are no surfaces within our felt-bodily sensations" (Schmitz 2010: 280).

but is also indivisible and absolutely located (see Griffero 2014b) – unlike the physical body³⁶ – on pain of falling back to the pathological³⁷.

2) With regard to the second point, I can say that the felt-bodily sphere concerns both what you feel within the body and what you feel in the pericorporeal space, yet without any mediation of either the sensory organs (pain, hunger, thirst, pleasure, vigour, relaxation, etc.) or the bodily schemes. Instead, sensory organs and body-schemata act by virtue of the felt-body's temporary "silence"³⁸, which works as a blind spot in relation to all following perceptions. Like the physical body, in fact, also the lived one is not even noticed whenever a fluid and effective motor spontaneity is prevailing and makes a spontaneously ecstatic orientation possible.

3) Let's now see my third point. The quasi-thingly felt-body is the resonance board³⁹ of atmospheres and other quasi-things. This is achieved through a *leiblich* communication with (or the embodiment of) any really salient object or form, starting from what we dwell in (chair, clothes, house), up to the weather, atmospheric feelings and, in general, qualia or affordances of the outside,

³⁶ It is a "system concentrically closed around an absolute centre, within a space and time whose directions are absolute" (Plessner 1928: 294).

³⁷ In fact, the question "where are you?" would be answered with "I know where I am, but I feel like I'm not there" by the schizoid patient (Minkowski 1933: 272 ff.). We could call it a (hard to observe) "spatiality of situation" (Merleau-Ponty 1945: 115).

³⁸ For the premodern Chinese, on the contrary, the *Leib* can be both externally perceived and internally touched and seen! (Linck 2011: 87).

³⁹ Linck (2011: 69, 134) typically defines the Chinese culture (especially with regards to medicine) as a culture of the resonance instead of the correspondence.

whose intermodal analogousness is precisely grounded in existential and felt-bodily resonances⁴⁰. These resonances, highlighting once again the co-belonging of man and the environment (including other people)⁴¹, are an immediate grasping of outside affordances: in short, they are the demand-qualities of atmospheric spaces, and at the same time an ecstatic extension in accordance with the felt-body's own lived directions. Through this (anti-solipsistic) felt-bodily communication, the body embodies⁴² not just its tools⁴³, but also all the things we experience in the pericorporeal space and whose peculiar voluminousity we sense: the car we drive, the bystander we miraculously avoid on the sidewalk, and so on.

4) Lastly, the most challenging point. Unlike the thing-body, which is composed of organs and is delimited within cutaneous boundaries⁴⁴, the felt-body – which is more important in a context that excludes the existence of organic sensations – is a body before or without organs (in a sense largely different from Deleuze's). It is made up of multiple felt-bodily isles⁴⁵, whose absolute

⁴⁰ "The felt-body transfers its own resonance onto the tuned-spatial phenomena" (Fuchs 2000: 197).

⁴¹ This also applies to the intercultural dialogue, whose competence implies that the partners "recognize and appreciate their *Leiblichkeit* and, with it, their readiness to be affected by feelings" (Müller-Pelzer 2012: 189).

⁴² Which is something more than the "embodiment" made possible by new habits that have become familiar (Leder 1990: 31).

⁴³ "The tool is integrated within the felt-bodily sensations, so that it is – and it is moved – as if it were one of my parts" (Böhme 2003: 305).

⁴⁴ As in the case of the phantom limb or the stick of the visually impaired as sensible-experiential extremities.

⁴⁵ A central notion in Schmitz (since 1965).

spatiality gives life to indivisibly extended felt-bodily motions. If feeling warm (for personal reasons) does not contradict the measurable external cold, it is because the felt-bodily isles are voluminous but surfaceless quasi-things, which we cannot identify with the articulate and discrete anatomical parts and even less with the increasingly more fine-grained parts (up to subatomic particles!) examined by physics. As they incarnate an existential and symbolic salience which in part is also culturally and historically variable, such isles are relatively stable sometimes (oral cavity, anal zone, chest, back, belly, genitals, soles, etc.), while at other times they can come forward or dissolve – a bit like high and low tides – on the basis of actual excitement (itch, palpitation, burst of heat, ache, etc.), or can be subsumed in general, indivisible and more permanent felt-bodily states (vigour, prostration, pleasure, uneasiness).

While at the practical level the felt-bodily isles are concealed by the permanent integration carried out by the perceptive-sensorial bodily scheme, and, at the theoretical one, by the dominant dualistic-psycho-physical paradigm, they are on the contrary perfectly revealed within the strictly phenomenal experience⁴⁶. We can also try to verify what we feel about our own selves and our surroundings while leaving the five senses aside⁴⁷, now

⁴⁶ As Kant himself also acknowledged: "In anxiety or joy the sensation seems to have its seat in the heart. Many affections, yea most of them, manifest themselves most strongly in the diaphragm. Pity moves the intestines, and other instincts manifest their origin in other organs" (Kant 1766: 50). Of course, the mistake is here simply the organic collocation.

⁴⁷ Schmitz 2010: 225, for example.

recognizing that – say, because of a significant contextual change – “the ‘I’ of the active person is located somewhere in the region of the eyes”, but, on the contrary, “in dancing, our “I” moves from the eyes to the trunk” (Csepregi 2006: 104). It is precisely in this sense that our chest as the felt-bodily isle of emotional involvement becomes other than the organs thereby located (a fortiori other than the cells, genes, chromosomes, atoms, etc.). Or, again, it is for this reason that our head, which we in fact perceive as busy (actualized) when we think in a particularly intense way, becomes other than the brain anatomically understood, and however involves in headaches and other cranial sensations, at best, the surrounding meninges or musculature and not the brain substance itself See (Leder 1990: 112). And finally, when we say that we feel butterflies in the stomach when we are in love, it becomes other than the heart as an organ. And so on, and so forth.

It is probably true that a relatively unitary perception of the entire felt-body is only possible thanks to some unstable equilibrium between epicritic sensibility (well-defined and fine-grained) and protopathic sensibility (diffuse and coarse-grained): otherwise said, between the maximal contraction numbing the felt-bodily isles and the maximal expansion, which instead melts them by integral dilution. Normally you feel the felt-body as a “vast, profusely articulate landscape, or even [as] a vast continent” (Schmitz 1965: 157): a landscape which obviously cannot be topographically defined⁴⁸ and requires almost

⁴⁸ Maybe in painting it requires a surrealist representation (see Schmitz 1965: 27 ff. and Soentgen 1998: 19).

a meditation practice⁴⁹ or, more simply, a fine-grained phenomenological perception. It needs an autoscopia, which is naïve precisely because it lacks those anatomical and syntactic-ontological biases⁵⁰ and in which, because the sentient cannot ever feel without also feeling herself, we could say that the perceiver merges with the perceived⁵¹. When the wind is blowing in my face, in fact, I don't feel my skin cells but I do feel at one with the wind (Rappe 2012: 70).

3. *How and where do atmospheres resonate?*

From this neophenomenological point of view, I can be satisfied neither with the psychological expedient of the body schema – that is the “three-dimensional image everybody has about themselves” (Schilder 1935: 11)⁵² and by which they capitalize all experiences, attitudes and beliefs whose object is the body – nor with the so-called

⁴⁹ Through which, in the light of a (neophenomenological) personal regression to a chaotic manifoldness, the Taoist adept views both a pantheon of gods and demons and above all human artifacts such as pagodas, towers and bridges (Linck 2011: 264-5, 268-71).

⁵⁰ Consider the difficulties transsexuals face when they strive to find a match between their felt-body and the topography of their (new) physical body.

⁵¹ “I feel my hand’ means that ‘what is felt, namely the hand, is but the feeling itself’. And such a feeling is not even that of an ‘I’ owning the hand like an object; rather it is nothing but the conscious being-the-hand. Such a consciousness is not habitual, though: it has to be practiced” (Böhme 2003: 120).

⁵² The inadequacy is obviously less strong if the body schema is defined as an automatic system of sensory-motor processes and pre-reflexive and proprioceptive consciousness (Gallagher, Zahavi 2008: 146), as “an invisible network of the spatial orientation [which is not] limited to our felt-body, but rather also includes its correlation to the environment and to its own dealing with things” (Fuchs 2000: 41).

body-image or -pattern, that is, the body as socially constructed and reified by the other's objectivizing gaze (Fuchs 2013: 85, Böhme 2003: 29). I can surely realize that both concepts obviously alleviate the modern epistemic anguish inasmuch as they allow one to somewhat locate the otherwise uncontrolled feeling within some delimited anatomical substrate, and thus to "cope with" (Schmitz 1965: 32) the situations one faces, but they only provide one with some "cultural" guarantee – as such subject to huge geographical, historical and even individual variations⁵³ – of the unitary liveability of the physical body. Even if these schemes don't simply derive from an associationist approach or from the holistic-Gestalt and dynamic ones⁵⁴, and even if they are perceived as natural because of the repression of their partially sociogenetic origin, they are in fact only, so to speak, the disintegrated outcome of the original felt-bodily and emotional feeling.

As it is composed of successive representations gained through sight and touch, the body schema represents, say, the foot as a unitary configuration (also semantic) that's durably localizable. On the contrary, the

⁵³ Indeed, the various body parts have been symbolized in many different ways, based on the gender, on the way to use them (some of them were much more disciplined in more "military" times), and, last but not least, on the way we think they are looked at by others. "The body schema, the way the body articulates", in fact is "at the same time an expression of the way the others see me" (Waldenfels 2000: 121).

⁵⁴ While the first does not put forward any rule for the associations and the second does not ever explain how to reach that totality, in its pragmatic concretism the last one wouldn't even explain the possibility of the "as if": waving the hands, for instance, pretending to greet someone (Waldenfels 2000: 114-5).

felt-bodily feeling is able to perceive in it – be it in normal conditions (falling asleep, waking up, sunbathing), pathological conditions (intoxications, phantom limbs⁵⁵, etc.) or artificial ones (autogenic training, massages, caresses, unctio)⁵⁶ – a peculiar voluminousity, intermittent and vaguely delimited isles, such as the ankle, the malleolus, the sole, etc. Were it a schema of the felt-body⁵⁷, the body schema would nevertheless be too late and, besides, it wouldn't result explanatory as regards the perception (already present in new-borns) of the unity and insular structure of the felt-body. And the reason is that it is too tied to two non-fundamental forms of spatiality: the local (perceptive body schema) and the directional (motor body schema) ones (see Griffero 2014b).

In short, these sorts of schemes always presuppose a quasi-thingly and felt-bodily feeling which is prior and more fundamental and works a bit like “the darkness needed in the theatre to show up the performance” (Merleau-Ponty 1945: 115). For instance, could a woman who feels “her body desired and looked at by imperceptible signs, and without even herself looking at those who look at her” (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 245) sense this

⁵⁵ Which is inexplicable in terms of illusion of the representational consciousness or as a malfunction of nerve funicula, and this is why it is meaningfully reinterpreted from both a psychological and a physiological (“existential”) perspective by Merleau-Ponty (1945: 88 ff.). The phantom limb is actually a felt-bodily isle, a quasi-thing, which appears to be delusional only insofar as it is framed on the basis of the body schema (for instance, when one leans onto the missing leg and falls). Schmitz thinks so as well, albeit rejecting (Schmitz 1965: 30; 2003, 387). Merleau-Ponty's explanation, which he considers grotesque.

⁵⁶ See Schmitz 2010: 231-2.

⁵⁷ As a “systematic representation and culturally specific of the lived-body and of its motion”(Rappe 1995: 34).

indiscreet glance, as it points to those anatomical parts which correspond to her own body schema? Or, rather, could she sense it as it points to those felt-bodily isles which, though felt within the movement, she cannot represent any more than a musician could represent the knowledge embodied in his own hands?

However, talking about resonance of felt-bodily-isles means restoring a way of thinking the body that was prior to the so-called axial Age. In ancient Greece, before the "discovery" of the spirit or mind (citing Bruno Snell), for which the *Körper* was something "dead" and thus alien to the cosmos, the body – although judged very positively of course only when free from impurities⁵⁸ – was indeed referred to only in the plural form, indicating precisely different felt-bodily isles⁵⁹. In this way what in the vast sphere of naïve experience is accessible without any reflexive self-attributing mediation is here opposed to the traditional inner psychical dimension as well as to

⁵⁸ For a correction of the generic "yes to the lived body" normally attributed to antiquity see Dörrie 1985: 178 ff.

⁵⁹ See Rappe's systematic work (1995), in line with Schmitz's interpretation. Very briefly: as soon as (in the Fifth century B.C.) feelings got secluded within a fictional internal container (the psyche) and conveniently set against a purely material corporeity, there was no more space either for (not only emotional) qualia of the external world nor for a dynamic felt-bodily dimension of experience. The psycho-somatic and therefore dualistic turn (soul/spirit vs. body) has been pedagogically functional so as to assure the human rational domination of both the internal and the external world, while downplaying the role of the involuntary vital experience and of the bodily-emotional involvement. The result was the correlated obligation to associate every experience no longer with a felt-bodily isle, but rather – often with little success – with a quantifiable organic-anatomical object medium. See Schmitz 1965: 365 ff.

the physical-anatomical one⁶⁰. And it is even more opposed to the neuroscientific myth of the brain: of a neuronal hardware subject to hyper-technological manipulations legitimated by likewise hyper-technological perceptions (CAT, NMR, etc.)⁶¹. After all, both the brain and any other neurophysiological element are never a felt phenomenon – “it is man who thinks, not the brain” (Straus 1935: 158) – and in any case, it should be noted that within a phenomenological account of experience “neurobiological differences make no difference when there is no phenomenological difference” (Ratcliffe 2008: 122). In other words, it’s totally impossible to go back from objective data like hormones, semiochemicals and c-fibres, for example, to felt-bodily impulses (Rappe 2012: 93). Sure, we should not confuse the absence of brain from thematic perception, quite similar to the necessary focal disappearance of other body regions, with its irrelevance to lived experience. The brain can therefore “be understood not only physicalistically but as an organ of the lived body, a structure of possibility opening onto the world” (Leder 1990: 111), an organ whose complete disappearance as object of experience grounds our experience. But this invisibility, even if arises precisely from the embodied nature of mind, is not an experience

⁶⁰ It is not (following Aristotle) the soul, but the felt-body that is every other thing: “body am I through and through, and nothing besides; and soul is just a word for something on the body” (Nietzsche 2006: 23).

⁶¹ Just as well, the relation between the mother and the foetus thus becomes surprisingly artificial. In a way, it is turned into an artefact, thanks to prenatal diagnostics (see Böhme 2003: 37).

from the first-person perspective. It is something I indirectly know but that I do not really feel.

But the time has come to see in what specific way the felt-bodily isles, as ways of finding myself in my lived environment and of eliciting a response to meanings and impressions, could really be a perfect and coenesthetic⁶² sounding board of outside atmospheric impressions. According to the simplest case, they obviously correspond through narrowness to oppressive atmospheres and through vastness to brightening ones. But things are slightly more complicated, because there are different kinds of atmospheres: they can be prototypic (objective, external and unintentional, and sometimes with no precise name), derivative (objective, external and sometimes also intentionally produced) and even quite spurious in their relatedness (subjective and projective). As veritable fields of force, they generate various types of emotional games and felt-bodily moods. I shall now examine them, albeit of course not exhaustively.

1) The first case, genuinely prototypical for all our approaches, is the so-called discrepancy encounter. Being refractory to a more or less conscious attempt at a projective re-interpretation, this kind of atmosphere gives birth to a successful process that, generating an almost unavoidable felt-bodily involvement in the perceiver, completely reorients his mood, be it positive or negative. In this experience our body is no longer that through

⁶² Coenesthetic (from *koiné*), in the sense that it's not localized but total and visceral, is a sort of echo-expression that follows the perception of sound, touch, visual, smell, but also climate and space-patterns.

which the world is experienced – that is, a silent and anonymous medium that disappears into the background – but it becomes more thing-like. By generating through some unease or excited state a more epicritic sensibility, this type of atmosphere makes us indeed more conscious of our body not as something we are, but rather as something we have, and in a sense stands in our way. Transformed now in a “conspicuous body” (Ratcliffe 2008: 112), it is unable to make us feel at home in the world as it did before.

In extreme cases this atmosphere turns on the isles (neck pain, muscle tension, abdominal cramps, spastic colon, or unexpected muscle relaxation, hunger, cleverness, weightlessness, boundless energy, agency, etc.) to the point of maximal contraction numbing the felt-bodily isles. It is no secret (see (Marcel 1978: 29-30, 36) that, especially when the body does not work as well as before (in this case also because of a certain invading atmosphere), our awareness of the *Leib* and of its destinal contingency appears remarkably increased. This induces us, in less serious cases, to testify reflectively (“I feel that way”) to a gap between us and the world (Plügge 1967: 73), and in serious ones to monitor and obsessively control our body⁶³. Though resulting in either a positive or negative mood, the ingressive-discrepant atmosphere can be the same. Sure, the impressive entrance hall of a major banking institution, for example, will frighten and

⁶³ When we get a headache or, worse still, have a stroke, what used to be the felt-bodily isles of our head or chest, expressing moods rather than diseases, suddenly become thing-like, alien and discrete parts of the body. Also, a certain atmosphere of affliction, which completely involves us, can result in hypochondria or dysmorphia.

make anxious those who venture there in search of a loan (whence perhaps the ocnophil impulse to leave the centre of the room to take refuge in protective nooks and crannies), while producing in one of its devoted and more philobatic employees an *esprit de corps* and such a pleasant felt-bodily communication with the space and the colleagues that it is not even perceived as an atmospheric effect. But it's very easy to see that these opposite affective and felt-bodily resonances are essentially answers to the "same" spatial-sentimental quality (of solemn vastness in this case).

2) The second possibility is that an atmosphere is syntonic thanks to the coincidence between the previous felt-bodily disposition of the perceiver and the spatial mood perceived. When this happens, no single felt-bodily isle is really engaged and the perceiver will rather experience a general psychophysical stasis (well-being or unease). When we feel good, this unperceived atmospheric correspondence⁶⁴ makes our body so "healthy" as to be completely absorbed in the world and in our plans. And it's precisely this lack of control and consciousness – this relaxed and trustful surrender to bodily and, in a

⁶⁴ The fluidity derives from the fact that she is "one with her body, insofar as she does not attend to it but attends to other things through it" (Ratcliffe 2008: 117). In other terms she experiences it as something obvious and unperceived (Fuchs 2013: 87). This is obviously quite different from the situation in which a certain pathologic felt-bodily-dependence can even hinder the mere sensorial-affective observation of the atmosphere one finds oneself in, thus causing an embarrassing atmospheric inadequacy for oneself and for others – like when we are moving in a disorderly manner in church or, on the contrary, in a too conventional way during a party with friends.

sense, anonymous and prepersonal impulses⁶⁵ – that ensures the achievement of harmonious and efficient performances, whereas, on the contrary, reflection and attention can yield uncertainty and hesitation (Csepregi 2006: 119), making our activities strained and mechanical. The well-attuned *intercorporéité* brought forth by a syntonic atmosphere is therefore either a facilitator or a hindrance in acting and thinking to the point that the situation can even seem atmosphereless⁶⁶: it's when one feels good (or bad) and doesn't know why.

3) A third possibility is that an atmosphere is antagonistic. We can, for example, feel a relatively different atmosphere from the one expected. We can, so to speak, read it physiognomically in the external situation to such an extent that we can define it and describe it to others but without being truly touched by it⁶⁷. This very resistance, maybe even conditioned by the inability to let oneself go or by a kind of felt-bodily anaesthesia (which doesn't necessarily coincide with prefrontal damage!), can in turn create a qualitatively different and even felt-bodily antithetical atmosphere. It's what happens, for example, when an architectural atmosphere of joyful order is so dull and conventional that, rather than making us

⁶⁵ See Waldenfels 1985: 160-1 and, referring to Mead, Coenen 1985.

⁶⁶ According to Hisayama (2014: 38-9), one can only perceive atmospheres that are neither completely dystonic nor completely syntonic.

⁶⁷ Just as an engaging event makes us unaware that our eyes blink, or grabbing an object may presuppose the vanishing of our hand (citing Merleau-Ponty and Sartre), the pre-reflexive, proprioceptive sense of the felt-body is a dimension that's normally not thematized: it's conceptually vague, yet atmospherically pervasive and certain precisely because it is not fully addressed as a single atmosphere.

rejoice and feel at home, it even ends up making us (atmospherically) sad and (felt-bodily) annoyed.

So there are certainly atmospheres arising in a very particular way from the dissonance and the discrepancy between what we bodily feel and what we, through social conventions, expect to feel, and even from our indifference. The very intensity of the protest of our mood in the case of an antagonistic encounter, while being indeed the best proof of the objective effectiveness of the atmosphere we react to, often also shows an ambivalent, confused and undecided bodily attitude. Sometimes this atmosphere even accentuates our previous and contrary mood, be it positive or negative, such as when our confusion is even exacerbated by the atmosphere of architectural rational orderliness we come across, or when a shallow party, instead of cheering us up, simply aggravates our previous felt-bodily sickness.

4) Even if the prototypical atmosphere is for me the one suggested by the first (and mostly discrepant) impression, the atmospheric effect certainly develops over time. So, provided that an atmosphere is at least partly cognitively penetrable and not totally deterministic, it could very well change sign and colour for various reasons during this dynamic and chronologically structured process and, as a consequence, it could resonate in variable felt-bodily states.

Let's make some examples. The discovery of the fictional or even manipulative character of an atmosphere reflexively cancels (at least in part) our starting genuine initiative and enthusiastic openness to the world. At a close distance the atmosphere of magnificence of a

building resolves into an atmosphere of decay that can even make us feel a felt-bodily anguish. An initially indeterminate atmosphere can specify itself, depending on a) the outcome of non-homogeneous sub-atmospheres, or b) on the scale-changes of the perceiver, or again c) on the fact that the feeling is centred – to use here two concepts dear to Schmitz – on another specific anchor point and/or generates a different field of condensation. In all these and similar situations, we'll have very different felt-bodily consequences, of course: for example, moving from excorporation to incorporation or vice versa. Nor can we ignore that, since the pleasure/pain distinction only invests the most peripheral states of existence, the most fascinating and – in a sense – authoritative atmosphere might perhaps not be the unilateral one but the "mixed" one. And this precisely because in its internal change it is never monotonous nor, in the long run, nauseating.

4. What happens to us and what we (believe we can) change

Summing up and without attempting a more detailed analysis, I can say that, regardless of the feeling it stimulates, an atmosphere finds in the perceiver a more or less clearly defined felt-bodily sounding-board. Now, I should not like to conclude without mentioning the predictable question of the possibility to improve (also through atmospheres) our felt-bodily situation. Indeed, it is a highly controversial issue, because it invokes an existential ethics that sees the felt-body as a "task" (thus disclosing the

kind of people we are)⁶⁸, rather than as a mere datum, and therefore suggests new life habits precisely while encouraging an embodiment-change⁶⁹. Yet, I wish to stress again that one probably learns who one is⁷⁰, “what it feels like” to experience one’s body, much more from pathic feeling, from the way one is able to “expose” oneself and be correctly heterodetermined⁷¹, rather than from one’s intentional actions. However, both Eastern thought and pragmatist somaesthetics have a very different view on this.

But within the scope of this paper it’s better to be clear and, perhaps, even a bit rude: we need not exotically search in the East – perhaps using certain untranslatable Eastern words as a pretext – what can be also found in the West, namely an anti-dualistic phenomenology (*in primis*, Schmitz’s one)⁷². Indeed, the Chinese and Japanese premodern way of thinking can be seen as an anthropo-cosmologic meditation on man’s *Körperleib* and on *qi* as a vital-atmospheric (but also social and intersubjective) fluid power with its *yin* (external aspect)

⁶⁸ “From our felt-bodiliness come moral problems, that is, serious problems, and as we make our decisions on those, we thereby decide what we are and what we are like as human beings” (Böhme 2008: 67).

⁶⁹ For a first, historiographically useful, approach to a phenomenology of the felt-body as a philosophy of nature working as a “‘didactical integration’ in the sense of an education to life and experience” (Thomas 1996: 201).

⁷⁰ “In general I am a self as it’s inevitable that I am given to myself”; “my body is not mine because I own it, but because I am given to myself as a felt-body” (Böhme 2008: 157, 160).

⁷¹ Especially if “felt-body” properly would mean being able to be scared! See Schmitz 2010: 248.

⁷² For a first insight, see Andermann 2012.

and *yang* (internal aspect)⁷³, a meditation particularly focused on the phenomenal-sensible sphere and, exactly like Western phenomenology, hostile to whatever technical manipulation and measurement. And even the lacking in Eastern thinkers of a specific conceptual thematization of the body and of one single word to designate it, in fact, could be seen also as a positive sign of their traditional reluctance to get involved in “our” dualism and to embrace instead the principle of polarity – a kind of nondual dualism. But Eastern thought also always aims to a cultivation of the body. This cultivation (think, for example, of breathing) has sure little to do with the Western idea of praxis and improvement⁷⁴, because it fully invests in the idea of a continuum between polarities (between body and soul, society and nature, inside and outside, etc.), rejects the one-sided egological Western idea of agency and conceives improvement⁷⁵ rather as a form of releasement. However, also this concept of cultivation has pros and cons. While not segregating human beings from the world’s expressions (with their emanative-atmospheric meanings), avoiding both the introjection of feelings and the sensualist reductionism by insisting on the in-between dimension, it nevertheless points out, as also recognized by some Eastern thinkers, the inconvenience of terribly weakening their personality

⁷³ The more recent Eastern civilization, on the contrary, is not lacking dualism, materialism and reductionism.

⁷⁴ See Linck 2011: 34, 62. This thought always stipulates an interactive relationship, in a fully atmospheric sense, between the *ki* in the felt-body and the *ki* in the world and/or in the others (Yamaguchi 1997: 52).

⁷⁵ On Eastern “cultivation” see Yuasa 1987: 85-98.

and identity (Kajitani 2008: 352) – which, on the contrary, is very important for New Phenomenology.

Following that, the too relaxed intercultural speaker – notwithstanding an undeniable “universal structural unity of the *Weltanschauung*” (Hisayama 2014: 122) or some “eidetic experiential structures independent of cultural differences” (Shaner 1985: 189) – must not take for granted an easy dialogue between Eastern traditional thought and *Leib*-phenomenology. Even though Eastern thinking about the body ensures us an always useful outside look at our preconceptions and mental cramps, there is still a big gap between the Taoist and Buddhist caring for a cultivation aiming to imperturbability and a phenomenology that, on the contrary, finds in the affective involvement its cornerstone and an unavoidable condition of subjectivity.

The second issue is maybe the trickiest one. As already said, I am not simply defining (not only metaphorically) the body as the “great reason” (Nietzsche) leading us to *amor fati* (Marcel 1978: 38-9), or repeating a critique of a civilization whose grounding, as we have seen, is the removal of the felt-bodily presence in favour of the physical. I shall now consider if the felt body is able to change in order to respond with explorative innovations to unforeseen challenges. In answering this question I’ll prefer to distance myself from other (and for me) too performative and optimistic projects, such as (practical and theoretical) somaesthetics. The latter was understood by Richard Shusterman as “the critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one’s body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (*aisthesis*) and creative

self-fashioning" (Shusterman 1999: 302). In his (far from trivial) claim for meliorism, which after all stigmatizes today's physical standards of experiential success only if and when they are considered in isolation (Shusterman 2008: 28), he suggests one should have an attitude both of "respect" and of "suspicion" toward our habits and sensory feelings⁷⁶. For Shusterman, in fact, not every bodily "conspicuousness" amounts to a loss of practical belonging, because sometimes one almost becomes the process itself⁷⁷, counting on a non-inhibiting body-reflection⁷⁸. A distinction should therefore be made "between introspection that is depressive, obsessive, and fo-

⁷⁶ See (Shusterman 2008: 212). Our prejudices, for example, often would be "somatically expressed or embodied in vague but disagreeable feelings that typically lie beneath the level of explicit consciousness" and that for this reason "resist correction by mere discursive arguments for tolerance" (Shusterman 2008: 25). Moreover, through the preference given to the unconscious lived body, we would even be unwittingly promoting the Platonic-Christian tendency to bring the body to the level of animal and dull inconvenience waiting to receive a higher purpose.

⁷⁷ "The pragmatic distinction between the perceiving I and the perceived me should not be erected into an insurmountable epistemological obstacle" (Shusterman 2008: 73).

⁷⁸ "We cannot simply trust our habits to correct themselves through unconscious trial and error or through eventual evolutionary adjustments. [...] Even if a familiar action can be performed more quickly and reliably through unconscious habit than through somatically self-conscious attentiveness, such mindful consciousness is important for learning new skills and necessary for properly identifying, analyzing, and rectifying our problematic bodily habits so as to render them more appropriate to our changing conditions, tools, and tasks and more in harmony with the changing needs and health of our basic bodily instrument. As long as our future involves transformations in bodily use and experience, somatic self-consciousness should play a central role in tracking, guiding, and responding to these changes" (Shusterman 2008: 13-4).

cused on the negative (designated as rumination) and other, more positive, forms of introspection that are distinguished as self-awareness or self-reflection" (Shusterman 2008: 175). The latter would consist in fact in breaking the habit by establishing a new and better one⁷⁹.

Shusterman is not devoting any attention to atmospheres. But should he be interested in them, he obviously would feel obliged to promote only those atmospheres that improve felt-bodily conditions and habits that are waiting to be unconscious in order to be effective. Here, without being allowed to enquire further, we touch on the dispute between those who, like Hermann Schmitz, exclude that it is possible to intentionally "produce" genuine atmospheres and those who, like Gernot Böhme, on the contrary, admit that the today pervasive "aesthetic work" (cosmetics, furniture, urban planning, lighting, fashion, set design, etc.) is usually able to generate atmospheres or at least their phenomenic conditions of possibility. In the light of my already mentioned differentiation strategy, one could say that while the prototypic atmospheres are fully unintentional and thus, strictly speaking, cannot be generated, the derivative ones can surely be intentionally produced. Which does not mean, of course, that an actual atmospheric feeling

⁷⁹ The somaesthetic attention, that, for Shusterman, is a part of everyday experience "does not need (nor is meant) to be a permanent focus that distracts from other goals" (Shusterman 2008: 123). This implies a clear distinction "between 'routine', unintelligent habit and 'intelligent or artistic habit'" (Shusterman 2008: 205). But how can we solve the general criteriological problem that undermines this somaesthetic approach? That is, what would allow us to properly break what would be a "flexible, sensitive habit"?

and its felt-bodily spontaneous resonance could not be undermined by a too analytical and disciplined survey.

Shusterman's challenging hypothesis is that whoever considers the reflection on the body as an obstacle to its fluency and grace⁸⁰ is simply defending the "traditional unquestioning faith in divine or natural providence" (Shusterman 2008: 13). On the contrary – in view of wise passiveness, which is ultimately the best way to our atmospheric syntony (or dystonia, etc.) with the world and that tangibly shows how every perception requires a previous passive (already atmospheric) synthesis – I think that body-sculpturing, even in a non-trivial sense, seems completely useless. The right everyday "exercise", as a strategically unprepared and unplanned art of living⁸¹, maybe often appears to us as entirely sufficient. This also applies to the "know thyself" motto, provided that we dilute its cognitive value and rather refer it mainly to felt-body (Gahlings 2008: 280). Finally: against the somaesthetic melioristic key issue⁸², and to some extent

⁸⁰ Let's remember the well-known Kleist's apology (*On the marionette theater*) of the grace and harmony of involuntary bodily movement prior to its examination by the perceptive body-schema.

⁸¹ "To experience oneself within the presence of the lived-body and to live felt-bodily living in nature, on the street, or at a meeting, is only possible through practice and by overcoming alienating attitudes" (Böhme 2010: 127).

⁸² Obviously somaesthetics tries to avoid its problems and inconsistencies by increasing its inner directions. Shusterman distinguishes, in fact, between an analytical somaesthetics with an ontological or genealogical approach; a pragmatic somaesthetics with a normative character and methods of somatic improvement, namely a discipline that can be oriented, but without rigid dichotomies, toward external appearance (representational somaesthetics) or inner experience (experiential somaesthetics); and finally a practical so-

also Eastern meditation and esoteric techniques⁸³, I think that many authentic and deep aesthetic-atmospheric experiences are even based on sensory deficits, inaccuracies and ambiguities (in the perceived reality and/or in the perceiver). Aesthetic (sensory) weakness (weariness, perceptive inaccuracy, careless mistakes, and so on) can therefore, to a certain degree, be often more fruitful than a sensorial intensification and analytical precision: how else to explain Proust's *Recherche*? A too precise and "healthy" perception sometimes even destroys an aesthetic pleasure and nullifies every atmospheric affordance. Accordingly, somaesthetics is too bound to an energetic program of sensory intensification and performance and thus unable to pathically recognize the right intrinsic aesthetic value of the nuances and ambiguities of perceptive experience itself, including the somewhat disturbing consequences of the fact that body itself is always both supporting and suffering. Sure, the here advocated pathic and barely reflexive ability to feel and know how atmospheres felt-bodily resonate⁸⁴ must be, inevitably, a lived but, to some extent, still a retrospective reflection on the felt-body. In other words, it cannot have

maesthetics as an "intelligently disciplined practice aimed at somatic self-improvement" (Shusterman 2008: 29).

⁸³ A criticism to be taken *cum grano salis*, because for Eastern thought and practices the goal is obviously not something to be attained, but something that rather makes itself known exactly when the thetic desire to know is neutralized see (Shaner 1985: 132).

⁸⁴ Indeed, also the introspective contemplation of how one finds oneself in one's environment (Schmitz) remains a reflection, whatever Gahlings (2008: 274) may think, even if without completely breaking with the pathic. This is what Fuchs (2000: 273) rightly defines a paradoxical "simultaneous reflection".

anything to do with the absolutely prereflective experience of the felt-bodily mineness, as it is better expressed by a simple (and anything but unphilosophical) "Aha!". Nor can *Leib*-phenomenologists claim to have that skill *de jure*. Often inactive and stressed like the others⁸⁵, in fact, also new phenomenologists often look like tourists who in a foreign land fail to adopt the local rhythm and therefore have a disembodied experience, content with a faded objectivity – that is, with what is nothing but a by-product of the necessarily more original lived richness of the *Leib* and subjectivity (which are, ultimately, two sides of the same coin). Only if this phenomenologist exactly focuses the felt-bodily resonance of atmospheric feelings can they avoid the risk to experience the world in narcotic terms (Sennett 1994: 18), to put it somewhat dramatically, to "have not felt the wind of the mountains, have not smelled the pines, have not heard the red-tailed hawk, have not sensed the slopes in their legs and lungs, have not experienced the cycle of day and night in the wilderness" (Borgmann 1984: 56, quoted in Csepregi 2006: 4). Otherwise, if the atmospheres they talk about are disembodied and not really felt-bodily involving, they are perhaps ersatz-feelings rather than true atmospheric feelings: in other words, something that is profoundly

⁸⁵ Maybe even thanks to these deficits he could find himself extremely subtle in addressing the body-problem. Indeed a "heightened personal interest can generate better theory by promoting more penetratingly vigilant attention, more subtle awareness, and keener sensitivity" (Shusterman 2008: 138). But does this not mean, thus undermining Shusterman's meliorism, that, on the contrary, better somatic performances make the philosophers of body less acute?

marked by the (today widespread) performance principle. But such a philosophy of the body would then be no longer a pioneering work, but only an uncritical and ultimately superfluous rear-guard approach.

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