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Towards Atmospheric Sensibility

Rumo à sensibilidade atmosférica

Hacia una sensibilidad atmosférica

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Resumo

Assim que ultrapassamos uma visão estritamente ambientalista da ecologia, a estética torna-se inevitável. O sensorial desempenha um papel central nas questões ecológicas atuais, pois nos convida a explorar futuros inesperados e a experimentar novas formas de viver. Nesta perspectiva, a sensibilidade não se limita à recepção passiva, mas abrange a capacidade de intensificar e transformar a nossa relação com o mundo. Existe uma forma de sensibilidade que poderia ser descrita como atmosférica. Não redutível à sensibilidade artística, paisagística ou ambiental, ela decorre da atenção difusa ao tecido sensorial dos espaços habitados, às variações tonais do mundo ambiente e à saliência atmosférica de um mundo de vida. A sensibilidade atmosférica testa três atributos fundamentais do ambiente: sua consistência, ressonância e persistência. Em outras palavras, a sensibilidade atmosférica é uma sensibilidade ao grau de consistência de um mundo ambiente, ela pode intensificar nossa capacidade de sentir e ajudar a manter nossa segurança ontológica. A sensibilidade atmosférica reconhece a capacidade do ambiente de provocar modos de sentir atentos às sutis metamorfoses dos ambientes de vida. É uma forma de se tornar sensível às mudanças socioecológicas atuais. Diz respeito à precariedade e fragilidade dos apegos sensíveis aos espaços cotidianos. O ambiente funciona como o operador definitivo da sensibilidade atmosférica e o repositório das mudanças na sensibilidade comum. Ele especifica um meio sensível, define e enquadra um contexto de percepção. Permite que a sensibilidade seja exercida e testada em contexto e em ação, mesmo nas situações mais comuns. No entanto, não estamos atualmente testemunhando uma nova distribuição do sensível, reunindo formas discordantes de sensibilidade e tipos concorrentes de ambiente? Desse ponto de vista, não há dúvida de que o campo do ambiente está em um ponto crucial de sua história.

Palavras-chave: Sensibilidade atmosférica. Consistência. Ressonância. Persistência. Ecologia.

Abstract

As soon as we move beyond a strictly environmentalist view of ecology, aesthetics become unavoidable. The sensory plays a central role in current ecological issues because it invites us to explore unexpected futures and experiment with new ways of living. From this perspective, sensibility is not confined to passive reception, but encompasses the ability to intensify and transform our relationship with the world. There is a form of sensibility that could be described as atmospheric. Not reducible to artistic, landscape or environmental sensibility, it stems from diffuse attention to the sensory fabric of inhabited spaces, the tonal variations of the ambient world and the atmospheric salience of a lifeworld. Atmospheric sensibility tests three fundamental attributes of ambiance: its consistency, resonance and persistence. In other words, atmospheric sensibility is a sensibility to the degree of consistency of an ambient world, it can intensify our capacity to feel and help maintain our ontological security. Atmospheric sensibility recognizes the capacity of ambiance to elicit modes of feeling attentive to the subtle metamorphoses of living environments. It is a way of becoming sensitive to current socio-ecological changes. It concerns the precariousness and fragility of sensitive attachments to everyday spaces. Ambiance functions as the ultimate operator of atmospheric sensibility and the repository of changes in common sensitivity. It specifies a sensitive milieu, defines and frames a context of perception. It enables sensibility to be exercised and tested in context and in action, even in the most ordinary situations. However, are we not currently witnessing a new distribution of the sensible, bringing together discordant forms of sensitivity and competing types of ambiance? From this point of view, there is no doubt that the field of ambiance is at a pivotal point in its history.

Keywords: Atmospheric sensibility. Consistency. Resonance. Persistence. Ecology.

Resumen

En cuanto superamos una visión estrictamente ecologista de la ecología, la estética se vuelve inevitable. Lo sensorial desempeña un papel central en las cuestiones ecológicas actuales, ya que nos invita a explorar futuros inesperados y a experimentar con nuevas formas de vida. Desde esta perspectiva, la sensibilidad no se limita a la recepción pasiva, sino que abarca la capacidad de intensificar y transformar nuestra relación con el mundo. Existe una forma de sensibilidad que podría describirse como atmosférica. No reducible a la sensibilidad artística, paisajística o medioambiental, proviene de una atención difusa al tejido sensorial de los espacios habitados, las variaciones tonales del mundo ambiental y la relevancia atmosférica de un mundo vital. La sensibilidad atmosférica pone a prueba tres atributos fundamentales del ambiente: su consistencia, resonancia y persistencia. En otras palabras, la sensibilidad atmosférica es una sensibilidad al grado de consistencia de un mundo ambiental, puede intensificar nuestra capacidad de sentir y ayudar a mantener nuestra seguridad ontológica. La sensibilidad atmosférica reconoce la capacidad del ambiente para provocar modos de sentir atentos a las sutiles metamorfosis de los entornos de vida. Es una forma de volverse sensible a los cambios socioecológicos actuales. Se refiere a la precariedad y fragilidad de los apegos sensibles a los espacios cotidianos. El ambiente funciona como el operador definitivo de la sensibilidad atmosférica y el depósito de los cambios en la sensibilidad común. Especifica un entorno sensible, define y enmarca un contexto de percepción. Permite que la sensibilidad se ejerza y se ponga a prueba en el contexto y en la acción, incluso en las situaciones más cotidianas. Sin embargo, ¿no estamos asistiendo actualmente a una nueva distribución de lo sensible, que reúne formas discordantes de sensibilidad y tipos de ambiente que compiten entre sí? Desde este punto de vista, no hay duda de que el campo del ambiente se encuentra en un momento crucial de su historia.

Palabras clave: Sensibilidad atmosférica. Consistencia. Resonancia. Persistencia. Ecología.

From Ecology to Sensibility

Numerous research projects contribute to developing ecological awareness by exploring new ways of inhabiting the world and experimenting with original forms of feeling. These projects explore various avenues that do not follow a single path, but rather outline multiple configurations of thought and diverse modes of attention. These include cultivating new forms of attention to living environments, making the imperceptible perceptible, listening to the Earth's stories, conceiving of inhabited environments in terms of new aesthetics, practicing unusual forms of writing that give voice to nonhuman beings, sharing the attachments that affect life, and taking a fresh look at contemporary landscape issues. This demonstrates that sensibility is not limited to passive reception; rather, it is a power that intensifies and transforms our relationship with the world. As soon as we consider experience a fundamental factor in the current ecological crisis, the question of sensibility resurfaces. Even better, sensibility becomes the privileged means by which we can open up the possibility of an inhabitable world. Sensibility plays a central role in today's ecological issues precisely because it invites us to explore unsuspected futures and intensify our sense of possibilities (Debaise & Stengers, 2016). In other words, as soon as we seek to overtake a strictly environmentalist vision of ecology, the realm of aesthetics becomes unavoidable and developing an ecology of the senses becomes essential (Abram, 1997; Tassin, 2020; Collot, 2022; Pierron, 2023). We must broaden and amplify our sensitive relationship with the world to open new paths for ecological transformation and unleash the vital powers of experience. The scope of the challenges we face requires us to seek new forms of sensibility and new ways of being sensitive to the world.

The Fabric of the Sensible

Among the various proposals designed to promote ecological awareness, one emphasizes the importance of the sensory domain itself, the texture of the sensory world, and what makes a world sensitive. This includes the air we breathe, the sound that envelops us, the light in which we bathe, and the smells that spread. It is also about the resonances and dissonances that comprise sensitive experience, the forces and affects that run through us, and the prehensions and affordances that shape our feelings. Ambient worlds involve all the mediums that sensitize the environment and condition sensory perception. For instance, vision requires light. One cannot see the same way in thick fog as in bright sunlight. Similarly, one does not breathe the same way in polluted air, such as that found in industrial areas, as in the rarefied air of a mountain range or the conditioned air of a shopping mall. Our bodies and emotional states are not the same in these situations. Rather than paying attention to specific identifiable and locatable objects of perception, we sense the surrounding world in which we find ourselves. We feel the sensitive fabric of a world in the process of appearing, being made, and transforming itself. As Mikel Dufrenne (1991, p. 118) remarks, "What matters to us here is less the thing itself than the fabric of which it is made: the sensible." Jocelyn Benoist (2013, p. 228–229) revisits the problem of perception and puts it in his own words: "It is no longer what is seen that matters—or at least, not only—but also, and first and foremost, the visible fabric in which it is given to be seen and how it is made visible." Here, we witness a reversal of perspective—what Peter Sloterdijk (2005) calls a process of "explication" – making manifest that which usually goes unnoticed and bringing to the foreground that which generally remains in the background. Alongside the usual order of things brought to the fore and perceived, there is also the order of the medium. This order operates discreetly

yet plays a fundamental role in how things appear and become perceivable (Heider, 1959). In other words, we not only face a world of objects; we are also enveloped in various media that give the world its sensory qualities and accompany our daily actions imperceptibly. As Emanuele Coccia (2010) puts it, the medium is responsible for phenomenalizing the world and giving existence to the sensible.

About Atmospheric Sensibility

Atmospheric sensibility refers to the sensitivity to the worlds around us that shape our daily lives and permeate our existence. It cannot be reduced to landscape, artistic, or environmental sensibility. Speaking of atmospheric sensibility recognizes that eco-anxiety and solastalgia profoundly transform our sensibility, coloring the ordinariness of our feelings and shaping our ways of being, feeling, and acting (Albrecht, 2019). From this point of view, the contemporary world is bringing about a new distribution of the sensible, giving rise to new ways of feeling. Atmospheric sensibility is characterized by three main features that deserve further development and illustration. First, the importance of the elements, particularly air. In the wake of ecological disasters and climate change, the fabric of the sensible is liable to tear, and the realm of the elements to deteriorate. Increasingly unbreathable urban smog, repeated heat waves, the multiplication of contaminated territories, the growing spread of megafires, and the development of acid rain are only the most spectacular manifestations of the pervasiveness of air—of certain qualities of air—in everyday life. Atmospheric sensibility involves paying attention to the influence of the elements and the increasing disturbances they are subjected to as a result of climate change. Emmanuel Lévinas called the "elemental," the impersonal, formless, faceless, and limitless milieu in which we are immersed. However, this elemental milieu is not devoid of qualities — quite the contrary. In fact, that is the whole point. For Lévinas (1971, p. 144), "sensibility brings us into relation with a pure quality without support, with the element." A substantial body of phenomenological literature emphasizes this elemental realm, which forms the basis of sensory experience. This paves the way for an ecology of elements that considers their depth and qualities (Fazakas, 2021). The elements therefore provide fertile ground for articulating sensitivity and ecology, openness to the transformative powers of ambiance, and awareness of the fragility of living environments. Secondly, atmospheric sensibility activates the exercise of the infra-sensible. While the aforementioned examples focus on obvious phenomena that easily enter the public realm, atmospheric sensibility operates primarily at a much more subtle, diffuse, and infinitesimal level. It proceeds from a logic of silent transformations, as described by François Jullien (2009). Atmospheric sensibility belongs to the realm of the infra-sensible and the molecular because it relies on infinitesimal sensory differentials and subtle capacities to feel rather than preformed ways of perceiving. It involves an art of attunements, or sensing differences (Ash & Gallacher, 2015). Such is the case, for example, in meteosensitivity (sensitivity to weather) and electrosensitivity (electromagnetic hypersensitivity), both of which highlight phenomena that are usually unnoticed by others (Corbin, 2013). Furthermore, the art world is also rich in creations that cultivate this form of sensibility. Fernando Pessoa is undoubtedly one of the most illustrious writers of atmospheric sensibility. His particular attention to climatic phenomena and weather conditions made him aware of "sensations of minimal things" and made him more sensitive to the microscopic flows, rhythms, and forces at play in Lisbon's ambiances (Gil, 1988). In other words, atmospheric sensibility implies a particular form of receptivity to imperceptible phenomena. Thirdly, atmospheric sensibility offers an alternative to narrative. Many experiments addressing ecological issues advocate creating new narratives to transform current

sensibilities (Vassor & Verquere, 2022). Examples include speculative fabulations, interspecific reports, science fiction or eco-fiction. It should be noted, however, that the narrative is not the only way to express the subtle experience of nature. Various other forms of writing are explored, drawing on parataxis (Bertrand, 2019), haiku (Barthes, 2003) and ecopoetics (Schoentjes, 2015). It is as if experimenting with new forms of writing that intensify the musicality of words and truly set the body vibrating is necessary. With atmospheric sensibility, new modes of expression emphasizing the pre-reflexive and infra-semiotic dimensions of bodily experience are also to be experimented (Gil, 2000). More specifically, atmospheric sensitivity emerges from an ecology of ambient gestures (Thibaud, 2023). An ambient gesture highlights the fundamental permeability between bodies and milieus, and the manner in which these domains interpenetrate and infuse each other. Each ambient gesture thus specifies and displays a mode of atmospheric impregnation, endowing the environment with a unique quality and depth. Each has the power to modulate the elemental backdrop against which we exist. One might argue that atmospheric sensibility stems from exposure and inspiration rather than narration and representation (Engelmann & McCormack, 2021). This calls for new modes of expression that explore what a true ecology of elements might look like. Atmospheric sensibility involves diffuse sensing, peripheral and defocused perception, and floating attention that is open to the presence of elemental milieus and the imperceptible infusion of elements. We are also dealing with attentive listening, or what Günter Anders (2020) terms "undirected availability": attention directed nowhere in particular. This involves not only current sensitive situations — here and now — but also situations that could happen or could have happened. Examples include a silent spring without birds (Carson, 1962), a world free from the pandemic where we can finally breathe freely, and the anticipation of an impending thunderstorm. Atmospheric sensibility involves hypersensitivity to the variations, modulations, and alterations of ambient worlds that breathe life into us. This ability stems from capturing infra-sensible forces and cultivating an art of nuance (Grossman, 2017).

Beyond ordinary perception

Although addressing the diffuse realm of the elemental and the lesser existence of ambiance is particularly difficult, the field of art is a valuable aid in this regard. It is as if an invisible college of artists is working to make this subtle, tenuous register of atmospheric sensibility perceptible. Rather than constituting ambiances as objects of representation, the focus is on embodying them concretely and making them perceptible through their tangible materiality. Niels Albertsen (2012) aptly refers to "gesturing atmospheres" to describe gestures that shape our affective relationship with the world. Therefore, it is a matter of experimenting with original artistic forms that are atmospheric ways of experiencing and presenting the world. In many cases, the atmospheric experience lies at the heart of artistic sensibility. Writers such as William Faulkner, Fernando Pessoa, Marcel Proust, and Virginia Woolf come to mind, as they suggest the atmospheric thickness and vibratory qualities of living spaces so well. Other examples include the stencils of Yves Monnier, the fog sculptures of Fujiko Nakaya, the dust prints of Claudio Parmiggiani, the carbon blacks of Anaïs Tondeur, and the viewing rooms of James Turrell. These artists make the materiality, thickness, and infinitesimal variations of aerial environments visible. Filmmakers such as Theo Angelopoulos, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Andrei Tarkovsky, Béla Tarr, and Apichatpong Weerasethakul convey the subtle infusion of climates and seasons. The list is far from exhaustive, and there are many lessons to be learned from these artistic creations, which continue to shape the field of aesthetics. Exposure to these works reinvents the

terms of sensory experience, opening us up to indecisive perception in Weerasethakul (Brayer, 2018), spectral forms in Parmiggiani (Didi-Huberman, 2001a), respiratory figures in Proust (de Toffol, 1991), looking in Turrell (Didi-Huberman, 2001b), and the time after in Béla Tarr (Rancière, 2004). Art's process of defamiliarization thus opens a new field of experience, destabilizing normal forms of perception and making us aware of atmospheric ways of inhabiting the world. Art demonstrates an ability to break free from ordinary perception, helping to cultivate unexpected forms of sensibility. As artistic creations demonstrate, atmospheric sensibility requires the ability to intensify the most subtle and tenuous sensations of experience.

A new distribution of the sensible?

Although atmospheric sensibility is rooted in an ecology that is sensitive to the elements and an awareness of environmental fragility, other contemporary forms of sensitivity exist within entirely different contexts. Current ambiances are also shaped by underlying economic (e.g., commodification) and technological (e.g., digitalization) trends that challenge the practice of ecological sensibility. Whether we emphasize growing aesthetic conditioning or a general tendency towards anaesthesia, it is as if the aim is to neutralize a sensual and carnal relationship with the surrounding world. In other words, the fabric of sensibility is subject to clashing forces in everyday life, at least quietly. Perhaps we are witnessing a new distribution of the sensible (Rancière, 2000), which brings together discordant forms of sensibility and competing types of ambiance. These dissonant trends in the evolution of the sensible world and our relationship with it imply the political nature of sensibility. The creation of ambiances in the contemporary world leads us to reconsider the conditions of shared experience, prompting a renewed inquiry into the essence of the common (Doutriaux, 2020). Rather than being the domain of general and unanimous agreement, sensibility is a place of dissent relating to the exercise of the senses. Paying attention to atmospheric sensibility highlights the ecological aspect of sensibility. Not all forms of sensibility—commercial, technical, and atmospheric—have the same value, produce the same consequences, or engage the same future for the world. In short, when it comes to sensibility, it is important to assert our values. Alongside disputes over cultural hegemony, we should also consider the dangers of sensory hegemony. Although it is much more discreet and diffuse, sensory hegemony is just as effective in terms of the economy of experience. Discrepancies between different sensibilities focuses particularly on neutralizing or intensifying our ability to feel. Furthermore, minor sensibilities—such as artistic, geobiologists or asthmatics, autistic or weather-sensitive individuals—open up fields of experience warranting further investigation (Revue Terrain, 2024). Therefore, it is crucial to preserve a pluralism of sensibilities open to the unexplored powers of body.

The Efficiency of Ambiance

To pay attention to the changes in the sensory texture of everyday life and the disturbances related to the elements, we must focus on the specific conditions of these changes. Several authors have emphasized the importance of everyday ambiances in understanding current changes in sensibility. Gernot Böhme (2017) develops an aesthetic of atmospheres that runs counter to the aesthetic economy at work in commodity society. Peter Sloterdijk (2016) elevates the atmospheric to the level of theory by revisiting the central question of air. Yves Michaud (2021) insists on

the rise of ambiances and affective atmospheres in the hyper-aesthetization process of the contemporary world. These authors lead us to understand how contemporary ambiances challenge major ecological issues. This focus on ambiances highlights the immersive and effective nature of sensory experience. There is no overarching position or face-to-face relationship, but rather a recognition of elemental milieus in which we are continually immersed. These ambiances and elements are constantly shaped by human activities, the layout of inhabited spaces, ordinary social practices, the growing influence of technological devices, and climatic events of varying magnitude. In this respect, ambiance can be thought of as a dynamic assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) that incorporates all of these elements and subsumes them under specific affective tones. Ambiance functions as the operator of atmospheric sensibility and the repository of mutations in ordinary sensibility. This is possible because ambiance is always embedded in a concrete situation, which makes it possible to assert the situated and circumstantial nature of sensibility. Indeed, ambiance is sometimes defined as the diffuse quality or affective tonality of a situation (Thibaud, 2015). In other words, ambiance specifies a sensitive milieu and defines a context of perception. It enables sensibility to be exercised and tested in context and in action, even in the most ordinary situations. Ambiance constitutes the basic unit through which we experience and create a sensitive world. Using a gardening metaphor, ambiance could be described as the domain in which atmospheric sensibility is cultivated and nurtured. Ambiance frames the normal forms of perception and directs our greater or lesser attention to atmospheric phenomena. With a subtle agency, ambiance distributes what is and isn't perceptible, differentiates the ordinary from the remarkable, identifies blind spots in perception, and participates in an ecology of attention. Ambiance filters and frames elemental milieus, endowing them with particular qualities and values. In short, ambiance is where perceptual habits form, sensory-motor schemes activate, and socio-aesthetic relationships with the world engage. As a vector for changing sensibilities, ambiance embodies and shares our ways of feeling, influencing the way the world inhabits us. Three major processes are at work in ambiance: it contextualizes and situates the fabric of an atmosphere, filters sensibility and attention to the elemental world, and articulates the physical characteristics of atmospheres with their sensory qualities and affective tonalities.

Fragile Consistency

If we are interested in the ecological powers of ambiances, various tests will inevitably arise. The first ecological test of atmospheric sensibility concerns the consistency of an ambient world. It refers to the concept of "composing a milieu." As Anne Cauquelin (2006: 7–8) rightly points out, "We frequent the incorporeals, and most of the time we are unaware of it. When I try to remember a moment in time, places, people, weather conditions and words exchanged all blend together in this memory: a delicate fabric that falls apart if examined too closely, and whose consistency depends on its fluidity. What emerges from this exploration is an atmosphere, an air, an envelope of smells and flavours, and here and there a few distinct elements with clearer form". To what extent does an ambiance hold together heterogeneous and unstable components of a situation? To what extent does it endow each situation with internal cohesion? In other words, atmospheric sensibility tests the degree to which a world is consistent, and the extent to which it holds together. An ambient world is not established once and for all but is constantly transformed and altered. Here, we encounter a fundamental theme of ecological thinking: weaving and interconnecting. Tim Ingold (2011) and Timothy Morton (2010) would call this a "meshwork." Ambiance relies on an ecology of flows that weaves the sensitive fabric of a situation, ensuring coalescence between

its components. This is the atmospherizing and homogenizing power of ambiance: its ability to set the tone for a situation and unify its affective atmosphere by endowing it with a unique, unifying, diffuse quality (Dewey, 1938). The flows of air, sound, light, and scent; the currents of energy, force, and vibration; all intermingle and spread, diffusing in small touches from one to the next. However, there are times when the consistency of an ambiance is disturbed and challenged. The current pandemic is one such case, challenging the free circulation of air, unraveling the coherence of a way of life, and profoundly transforming everyday atmospheres. Masks, forced confinement, and social distancing reveal air's unsuspected significance in everyday practices and call for atmospheric sensibility. Consequently, we understand that a situation has greater internal consistency when it allows for the circulation of flows and encourages the mixing of elements. This implies extending the classic notion of a situation to include its climatic, aerial, and seasonal components. With atmospheric sensibility, a pure logic of spatial scales no longer applies. Consider, for instance, how a sandstorm in the Sahara can spread to Europe, altering the landscape and redefining the ambient situation. Thus, the micrological meets the aerial and the corporeal enters into a relationship with the cosmic. Some urban critics have pointed out a contemporary tendency to create artificial environments that are highly enclosed and hermetic. Lieven de Cauter (2004) has spoken of the capsularization of urban spaces and the associated ecology of fear. On the other hand, atmospheric sensibility makes us sensitive to the forces of the cosmos and the breathing of the Earth. This sensitivity stems from paying attention to the fragility and precariousness of the envelopes that inhabit us. The porosity of bodies and the permeability of elemental milieus are at stake. Undoubtedly, we have much to learn from the aesthetics of breath at the heart of porous oasis ambiances (Ben Ayed, 2021). Remember that atmospheric sensibility is a sensibility to the degree of consistency of an ambient world.

Uncertain Resonance

The second test of atmospheric sensibility is concerned with the resonance of ambiances. It refers to the concept of "infusing life." The question of resonance has become an important topic in ecological thinking and is the subject of much debate. First, a strictly environmentalist and instrumental approach to inhabited spaces is insufficient for ecological action. Instead, the challenge is to establish and maintain a vital relationship with the Earth and cultivate our ability to resonate with it. At stake is our ability to affect and be affected by the atmospheres in which we exist. According to Hartmut Rosa (2018, p. 194), resonance is "a specific mode of relationship by which the world, or a segment of it, is experienced as responsive." However, if nature is typically considered the primary sphere of human resonance, various authors have noted a decline in this tendency. Robert Pyle (1978) speaks of the extinction of the experience of nature; Hartmut Rosa (2018, p. 194) speaks of the crisis of resonance in late modernity; and Baptiste Morizot (2020) speaks of the crisis of sensibility toward the living. It is as if a fundamental dimension of human experience is being amputated. Without delving into the debate, I will mention two points of controversy within contemporary ecological thinking. First, the very notion of nature is increasingly being called into question, raising fresh questions about its relevance and efficacy (hence the hesitation to speak of "natural" elements when discussing the elemental). Second, the Romantic sensibility is often invoked in terms of resonance and feelings about nature (Collot, op. cit.), despite being the subject of substantial criticism (Morton, 2007). These two remarks demonstrate how atmospheric sensibility is intertwined with contemporary debates that lack clear boundaries. With resonance, however, it is the pathic moment of sensation that is put to the test—that is, the

sympathetic communication with the world that makes feeling the condition of possibility of all experience (Straus, 1963). Before becoming the object of cognitive perception, an ambiance is immediately experienced and felt. As Henri Maldiney (1973, p. 136) notes, based on Erwin Straus's ideas: "What we call sensibility to colors, forms, and sounds is entirely constituted by this pathic moment." From this point of view, atmospheric sensibility is not primarily the result of objectifying intentionality but rather engages with the world in an immediate way. By participating in the world's animation, including its atmospheric and tonal variations, ambiances provide an ideal domain for developing new aptitudes for feeling and resonance. Hartmut Rosa acknowledges the capacity of positive affective tones to pre-activate and initiate resonance. An ambiance intones bodies and situations, transmitting "vitality affects" (Stern, 1985) and possessing a tonalizing power that can open up new affects. Clearly, not all ambiances are equal in this respect. Some predispose us to possible resonances and intensify our sense of being alive, while others narrow the field of experience. Research could focus on creating ambiances with positive affects that function as bait for resonance. However, remember that the ability to be affected is not unique to human beings. It is a faculty common to all living beings. A flower turns toward the light, and a dog's ears perk up and become alert. In these cases, too, there is a variation in the milieu, however slight. An act of sensing occurs. Feeling can be defined as the ability to perceive subtle changes in one's sensory environment. This generalized sense of perception allows one to move beyond a strictly anthropocentric perspective (Debaise, 2015). If atmospheric sensibility exists, it exists at the level of living beings, not just human beings. This line of thought has far-reaching consequences; it implies acknowledging the subject's decentering in theories of ambiance. It means shifting from an egocentric to an ecocentric perspective. Remember that atmospheric sensibility intensifies our capacity to feel.

Temporary Persistence

The third test of atmospheric sensibility is concerned with the persistence of ambiances. It refers to the concept of "maintaining the ordinary." One question is how to become sensitive to what has been, what endures over time, and what may come to be. Atmospheric sensibility involves caring for the permanence of a world by prolonging and nourishing what remains. In this respect, ambiance plays a vital role in ensuring continuity between past, present, and future experiences. Through continuous impregnation and imperceptible infusion, ambiance exerts a subtle and pervasive influence that endures over time (Thibaud, 2018). At the territorial level, it is less a matter of caring for the stage – the most obvious and spectacular components of a territory – than caring for the backstage and background, nurturing sustainable potentialities, and cultivating existing resources. I use the term "ambient gesture" to refer to the many gestures involved in maintaining living environments. These gestures can be on a grand scale, such as desartificializing land, developing a soft mobility policy, or demonstrating against mega-ponds. However, they can also be ordinary and banal, such as taking care of a garden, closing a window to keep a room warm, or sweeping outside our door. Breathing is undoubtedly the basic paradigm of ambient gesture (Thibaud, 2025). It relies on a rhythm of inhaling and exhaling to nurture both body and world and inevitably involves the other in this shared condition. As Marielle Macé (2023: 80) points out: "To conspire is not only to breathe together—still less to breathe in the same way, at the same rhythm, as if in step—but to breathe with each other, from each other, into each other, and through each other." Ambiance ensures the continuity of ordinary experience and contributes to the basic trust we have in the world as it is, appears, and is maintained. What is at

stake here is ontological security. Over time, ambiance establishes a familiar, habitual living environment that provides an existential foundation, reinforcing what we take for granted. This is how ambiance makes the world habitable. This atmospheric form of trust has been referred to as existential trust (Courtright, 2013) and is generalized, ambient, and diffuse. However, this sense of reliability can sometimes be challenged. The ongoing pandemic is a perfect example. The loss of this natural sense of security can also undermine perceptive faith, causing us to doubt our perceptions or become hypervigilant. Remember that atmospheric sensibility helps maintain our ontological security.

Respecifying the ambiance

What could be more subtle yet precious and vital than paying attention to the fragile fabric of sensibility, the unnoticed breaths of atmospheres and the subtle affects that infuse life? Such atmospheric sensibility permeates our commitments and attachments to our living environments. The importance of diffuse tones and subtle sensations must be recognised, and this art of nuances emphasised. The aim was to question the atmospheric transformation of our sensitivity, by exploring the field of ambiances. In other words, atmospheric sensibility relates to a lesser mode of existence that needs to be recognised and established (Lapoujade, 2017). When considered in this manner, ambiance emerges as a guide to subtle attentions and a unique perspective that amplifies the faintest whispers of sensibility. Ambiance has the power to transform our relationship with the world by opening up new modes of feeling. Operating on the fringes of the phenomenal, ambiance functions as a resonator of the world's most minute alterations as they unfold. However, we must reconsider the notion of ambiance by amplifying its potential and exploring its possibilities. This requires recognising its cosmic content, integrating its climatic, elemental and meteorological components and expanding the human sensorium by experiencing its vibratory forces, vital affects and molecular textures. Ambiance has the ability to activate these immeasurable registers of experience, but they are often obscured by the weight of daily routines and overly structured representations. Respecifying the notion of ambiance in this way requires us to reconfigure our perceptual habits by drawing on minority, artistic and other-than-human sensibilities. It is worth noting that our sensibility is transformed not only through words and stories, but also through gestures and atmospheres that cannot be reduced to the strict domain of representation. So-called clear and distinct perceptions are underpinned by an underground world of passive syntheses and infra-semiotic ambiances that influence our most intimate ways of being. There is no doubt that the field of ambiance is at a pivotal point in its history. The key issue is its ability to adapt to new living conditions and increase atmospheric sensitivity in response to current ecological challenges.

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