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## LANDSCAPE, ATMOSPHERE AND THE EARTH-SKY WORLD

### 1. From environment to landscape

Like almost everyone else, I came late to the concept of atmosphere. In this essay, I shall describe how I eventually arrived at it, possibly along a rather different trajectory than most, and suggest how we might take it further. I come from a background in ecological anthropology, that is, the study of relations between human organisms and their environments. When, in the 1970s, I embarked on my studies in the field, ecological anthropology was heavily biased towards perspectives drawn from the natural sciences – the idea was to apply models from animal ecology to the study of human populations. I soon realised, however, that this could take us only so far. For humans, I thought, participate not only as organisms in systems of ecological relations, but also as intentional beings, or persons, in systems of social relations. My position, as it developed during the early 1980s, was that every human being participates simultaneously systems of both kinds, respectively ecological and social. The problem, then, was to understand the interplay between them (Ingold 1986, 9). Behind this lay the assumption that uniquely in the animal kingdom, human beings live a split-level existence, half in nature, half in society; half organism, half person. The more I tried to defend this assumption, however, the more unsustainable it became. Eventually, by the end of the 1980s, I realised that I would have to give it up and start all over again. What, then, would become of ecological anthropology?

In the early 1990s, for reasons largely unconnected with my own intellectual travails, archaeologists and anthropologists began to take a renewed interest in landscape (e.g., Bender 1993, Tilley 1994, Hirsch-O'Hanlon 1995). Their influences came not from the natural sciences but from the humanities, above all from cultural geography and the history of art. I wondered whether the concept of landscape might give me what I needed – a way to describe how human persons relate not just to others of their kind

but to their other-than-human surroundings, which would not mean having to reduce these latter relations to the biophysical level of organism-environment interactions. Closely connected with this interest in landscape, among anthropologists, was also a renewed focus on the body. Until then, the body had figured little in our discussions, and when it had, it was treated as little more than a symbolic resource, on which humans could draw to express their ideas about social organisation and its cultural forms (Douglas 1970). All that changed, however, when we began reading the work of phenomenologists, such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964, 1968), who situated the body as a living subject, as *Lieb* rather than *Körper*, at the heart of their concerns (Jackson 1983, Csordas 1990). In place of the human organism in its environment, we now had the human body in a landscape.

Yet the problem of the split between sociocultural and biophysical levels of existence – the one emergent, the other residual – had not gone away. As a living subject, we were told, the body is more than a mere organism, as it might be described in anatomy and physiology; and the landscape is more than a mere environment, as it might be described in terms of ecology or geophysics. The problem, for me, was how to articulate the idea of a living being, dwelling in a landscape, that would take us beyond this split between the ‘more than’ and the ‘mere’, since only by doing so, I believed, could we restore human beings to where they truly belong, within the continuum of the living world. I struggled to solve the problem, but eventually found the solution in an ontological shift from being to becoming. I had to think of the human being as a human becoming, and of the landscape too as a process, as something perpetually under construction, in and through the activities of its diverse inhabitants.

In 1993, I published an article entitled *The Temporality of the Landscape*, in which I attempted to flesh out this processual view. I did so by introducing a parallel concept, of ‘taskscape’. By this I meant the array of different activities, whether undertaken by humans, animals, plants, or other beings or things, as they go along together and respond to one another. On the face of it, I thought, the difference between landscape and taskscape is akin to that between painting and music: the one appears to be laid out before our eyes; the other only emerges in performance (Ingold 1993, 161). Latterly, however, I have come to regret coining ‘taskscape’. It is an ugly word, and feeds the fashion for

multiplying 'scapes' of every possible kind (soundscapes, mediascapes, ethnoscapings, etc.). It has moreover been taken up uncritically, especially in archaeology, in a way that bears no relation to the context which led me to propose it (Ingold 2017, 26). For I had never really intended to put landscape and taskscape into separate compartments. Quite to the contrary, my purpose had been to show that once we recognise that the textures of the landscape are not in fact readymade but woven through a nesting of processes of variable temporal scales ranging from the geomorphological to the biographical, then the taskscape effectively folds into the landscape, and the distinction between them disappears. I had introduced the concept of taskscape precisely in order to show why, ultimately, it is not needed.

## **2. The meshwork and the earth-sky world**

Meanwhile, my thinking was heading off in a new direction, revolving around the idea of the line (Ingold 2007). Life, I realised, is lived along lines, so that what we may call a way of life is really a line traced by a living being through a world that is itself a tangle of lines traced by other beings. It was in the first years of the new millennium that I eventually came up with the concept of 'meshwork', as a tangle of life-lines. Ecology, I surmised, is really the study of the life of lines (Ingold 2007, 103). These living lines, however, are fundamentally distinct from lines of the sort that Euclidean geometry defines as the shortest distance between points. By the same token, the meshwork is quite distinct from the network, at least as it has come to be defined in our era of information and communications technology. The network concentrates life into points, and its lines are abstract connections between them. They are point-to-point connectors. In the meshwork, by contrast, the lines are of living beings themselves. Each is the trace of a movement, and they are not so much interconnected as intertwined. It was thus, in the movement of my own thinking, that what had begun as the taskscape became the meshwork, the weave or texture of the land, woven in and through the activities of its inhabitants.

But if I had grown dissatisfied with 'taskscape', I had become disenchanted with 'landscape' as well. In the minds of many analysts, the term is closely associated with a pictorial aesthetic more interested in capturing the scenic layout of surface features than in what is going on in either the sky above or the earth

below. Although in most landscape paintings the sky takes up more than half the picture, and despite the efforts of generations of artists to render on canvas its billowing shades and tremulous illuminations, art historical analyses have concentrated overwhelmingly on the ground, the vegetation and buildings bedded into or founded upon it, and the scenes of human and animal life enacted over it, while paying scant regard to the sky, which has no surface, or indeed to the earth which, being below ground, remains hidden. Yet despite the assertions of many art historians to the contrary, the concept of landscape is far older than its painterly depictions. Literally meaning 'land-shaped', the term is indigenous to the agrarian traditions of northwestern Europe, dating back to early medieval times (Olwig 2008). The farmer would thus shape the land with axe and plough. His back braced against the heavens, he wrestles with the resistances of the earth and the vagaries of wind and weather. Like the painter but not the historian or critic, he too inhabits a world of earth and sky, knowing full well that the ground is not given but has laboriously to be wrought out, from within the elemental matrix of soil, air and water.

For me, few texts have been more influential in thinking about these matters than psychologist James Gibson's (1979) treatise on the ecology of perception. For Gibson, too, the inhabited world is not so much a landscape as a composite of earth below and sky above. But the ground, in his view, is an anything but wrought out. On the contrary, it is before all else, the surface of all surfaces, on which everything stands, establishing a fundamental interface between earth and sky, and keeping each to its respective domain (Gibson 1979, 10, 16, 33). Yet despite my overall admiration for Gibson's ecological approach, this, I thought, could not be right. For if the ground were truly an interface, then it would have a topside and an underside, separating the sky on one side from the earth on the other. But in truth, it has neither. As every farmer knows, nothing will grow unless air, soil and moisture can combine and react in the presence of sunlight. The ground of cultivation, far from dividing earth from sky, is thus formed in their mingling, where the sky's elements – air, moisture and the fire of the sun – beating down upon the soil, meet the earth's rising in the growth of living things. It is not so much a platform upon which life struts about, as a zone of interpenetration in which all life is lived (Ingold 2008). And as a convergence of the

earth's uprising and the sky's befalling, it is the prime example of what architectural design theorist Lars Spuybroek (2016, 57-58) calls a «deep surface».

Such is the ground in a world of earth and sky. In turning from taskscape to meshwork, I thus found myself turning also from the concept of landscape, with its emphasis on stage and scenery, to the deep surfaces of what I called the 'earth-sky world'. Now my question had shifted yet again. What is the relation between the meshwork and the earth-sky world? Even at the start of my inquiries into the life of lines, I had an intuitive feeling that there was some relation, some deep affinity, between lines and the weather. Now, in posing the question of the meshwork-earth-sky relation, this was forced on my attention. And it was at this point that the atmosphere crept in. As a student of lines – a linealogist – I had to become a student of atmosphere as well, a meteorologist. What kind of meteorology is this? And what is the relation between linealogy and meteorology?

### 3. Linealogy and meteorology

I had arrived at the idea of atmosphere from thinking about the sky, and about what goes on in the sky – namely, weather. For me, it has always been self-evident that atmosphere is, in the first place, a meteorological phenomenon. The word meteor – derived from the Greek *meta-*, 'higher' or 'beyond', plus *-aoros*, 'raised up', 'suspended', or 'hovering in air' – referred originally to portents in the sky which people used to read for what they might foretell (Jankovic 2000, 37). Meteors, besides being prophetic, were intrinsically atmospheric. It came as a surprise, then, to discover that there already existed a large body of literature on the theme of atmosphere, largely produced by German-speaking philosophers of phenomenology and aesthetics, that had little to say about the sky, made only passing reference to the weather, and would have no truck with meteorology at all. It seemed to be talking about something entirely different. I will come back to this. First, however, let me return to linealogy and meteorology.

Think of the affiliations between the following:

walking	breathing
weaving	the passage of time
observation	feeling

singing	resounding
storytelling	echoes of memory
traces of drawing	colours of the palette
writing on the page	meteors in the sky

The linealogist asks: what is common to walking, weaving, observing, singing, storytelling, drawing and writing? The answer, of course, is that they all unfold along lines of one kind or another (Ingold 2007, 1). But as we walk, we also breathe the air, in and out. As we weave, time passes, measured in the oscillations of the shuttle. As we observe, the things we follow captivate our attention, which is consequently fraught with feeling. As we and others sing, our voices resonate all around, seeming to fill the air. The stories we tell likewise echo with the memories of the persons and things they evoke. The drawn line traces a path on a surface, but it is colour that tinctures the void with an affective hue. And where the line of writing tells on the page of what will befall, the meteor does the same in the heavens. The meteorologist, then, asks: what is common to breath, time, feeling, sound, memory, colour and the sky? This common denominator is what I understand as ‘atmosphere’ (Ingold 2015, 53-54).

As linealogy calls for a concept of line that goes beyond the narrowly geometric, so this kind of meteorology is wedded to a concept of atmosphere that goes beyond the metrics of ambient geospace. Indeed, the reductions of mathematical geometry parallel those of scientific meteorology. Geometry compresses life into points and defines the line as the shortest distance between them; scientific meteorology maps masses onto volumes and defines density as the ratio of one to the other. To progress beyond these reductions, the first thing to do is to reintroduce the element of air. Theorists have expounded at length on the matter of subjects and objects, or persons and things, and the possibility of hybrid or quasi-entities that are both, yet neither. But in much of this, it is as if no-one has given a thought to the air. This is because, in terms of a discourse that focuses on solid objects and their surfaces, or on artefacts and landscapes, the air is literally unthinkable. We have either to pretend that air does not exist or that, like the proverbial ether, it is immaterial. In many discussions today, where the air is, or should be, theorists have simply substituted the word ‘space’. While they admit that space

may be suffused with all kinds of emanations from whatever may be found there, it is considered in itself to be materially void.

The thing about air, and what makes it so hard to grasp from within a view of the material world as consisting of bounded objects in space, is that it is not somewhere but everywhere, without form or surface. It is not fixed but fluid, not solid but gaseous, not bounded but diffuse. As such, the air is not another object in the world that we can interact with. It is, rather, the very condition that makes interaction possible in the first place. I have demonstrated this with my students by flying a kite. The flyer interacts with the kite, with the string as a line of interaction. But she does not interact with the wind. Rather, the wind – the flow or current of air – makes the interaction possible. Without it, the kite will not fly; and nor, for that matter, can the flyer breathe. Now, if air is a condition of interaction, then it follows that the quality of that interaction will be modulated by its fluxes, that is, by the weather (Ingold 2010, 126-127). In French, weather is *temps*, ‘time’, from the Latin *tempus*, whence ‘tempo’ and ‘tempest’ (Serres 1995, 27). But this is not chronological time. It is a time that is ‘kairological’, perceived not in the succession of events but in the attunement of attention and response to the variations and oscillations of one’s surroundings. This is what used to be known, colloquially, as weather-wising (Szerszynski 2010, 24).

The weather is an ever-present undercurrent to action as we go along in the world. This is expressed in a cluster of weather-related words derived from the Latin *temperare*, ‘to mix’ (as distinct from *tempo*, ‘time’). These include ‘temperature’ and ‘temperament’. With its twin connotations of blending and fine-tuning, the verb ‘to temper’ captures perfectly the way our experience of weather unifies our affective lives with the aerial milieu in which these lives are led. We are thus constituted not as stable beings but as temperamental becomings, afloat in an earth-sky world that is never the same from one moment to the next. That all these words refer interchangeably to both characteristics of weather and human moods and motivations demonstrates that weather and mood are not just analogous but, at some more fundamental level, one and the same. This congruence of the cosmic and the affective is crucial, as we shall see, to our understanding of atmosphere.

#### 4. Science and aesthetics

Let me return to the difference between scientific meteorology and the sort of meteorology I need in order to engage with the life of lines. For scientific meteorology, the atmosphere is the gaseous environment that surrounds the globe known to us as planet Earth. As such, it belongs to a picture that can only be obtained directly from outer space. For astronauts, indeed, this planetary atmosphere is not only perceptible but a source of grave danger, since their ship, unless powerfully protected, could burn up on re-entry. Their colleagues at ground control, however, have only the data relayed by remote instruments to go by. Cocooned within their cavernous headquarters and seated at their terminals, the scientists and engineers in charge of the mission track its progress from incoming data-streams. What for them is atmosphere, measured and recorded, plays no part in their moods and motivations. They will more probably be excited by the surrounding buzz of computational activity. Of the turbulence of the air outside, from which they are fully insulated, they know nothing.

The rest of us, however, accustomed to life in the open and more reliant on the evidence of the senses, see things differently. For us the atmosphere is the realm of the sky. Arching above our heads like a dome with no surface, it is something that we, and other creatures, sense. Not only is it felt in the air we breathe; its unruly fluxes are also experienced in what it feels to be warm or cold, buffeted by wind, drenched in rain, caught in a storm and so on (Ingold-Kurttila 2000, 187, Simonetti 2019). We are back with the weather. What kind of meteorology, then, would measure up to this weather experience? This is the moment at which to return to the field of aesthetics, wherein the concept of atmosphere has followed a very different trajectory. Where science gives us an atmosphere without feeling, in the atmosphere of aesthetics, feeling is everything. It could be the buzz of excitement in mission control, just as much as the sound and fury of a winter's storm. Either way, atmosphere fills the unbounded and immeasurable space of conscious awareness.

Philosophers of aesthetics are adamant in rejecting the reductionism of scientific meteorology, with its impulse to divide the expanse of atmosphere into measurable volumes. But they equally abjure the reduction of sensory experience to states of mind, registered only in the interiority of the knowing subject.

With the division between interior mind and exterior world – the one to be studied by cognitive psychology, the other by the meteorological physics – the phenomena of atmosphere vanish as into a crevasse. So writes Hermann Schmitz (2023, 28), doyen of the German School of atmospheric phenomenology, and I would agree. But in setting up an atmospheric so rigidly opposed to scientific meteorology, and indeed to meteorology of any kind, might Schmitz have gone a step too far? If feeling is everything, what happens to the turbulence of the air?

According to Schmitz, an atmosphere is any unbounded or ‘surfaceless’ space of feeling, which has the potential to stir up or agitate the sensibilities of an impressionable body situated in its midst. Weather phenomena can indeed be considered atmospheric in this sense. If the storm whips up a fury, the warmth and radiance of a calm summer’s day can induce anything from serenity to stupor. But if, for Schmitz, weather is always atmospheric, the reverse does not hold: not all atmospheres are weather-related. The buzz in mission control, for example, is not. Indeed, in his view, weather is merely one instance of the many countenances that atmospheres can assume, and of lesser importance at that. It is nevertheless singular – and indeed decidedly paradoxical – in one respect, namely, that by its very nature, it is a space of quasi-feeling that is not necessarily felt. For the weather is there, even if no-one, at that moment, is affected by it. And it is in this paradox that we can begin to see where an atmospheric aesthetics, of the kind proposed by Schmitz, deviates from my kind of meteorology, founded in the atmospheric of the weather-world. It is all a question of air.

In a nutshell, my meteorology, as the word implies, is a feeling for air. But for Schmitz, atmospheres are feelings ‘in’ the air. In themselves, they are therefore not meteorological at all. Indeed, Schmitz uses the term ‘meteorology’ rarely, and in the strict scientific sense, only then to reject it (2023, 28). And air is not on his radar. Here are three weather-related examples, to which he often returns. First, imagine a day with dark, brooding clouds. It is enough to make anyone feel gloomy! This gloom may or may not grasp or overwhelm us. Either way, for Schmitz, it is not the clouds themselves that partake of the atmosphere, but the gloom with which they are laden. Second, imagine the enlivening effect of fresh air, after you have long been confined to a stuffy room. Once again, according to Schmitz, it is the refreshment, not the air, that

belongs to the atmosphere. For the air, he claims, is merely a 'construct'. Third, imagine that you are out on a windy day. You feel the wind on your cheeks. We can allow the wind as a phenomenon of atmosphere, Schmitz admits, but only if it is understood as the feeling we have of its blowing against us, and not in itself, as a movement of air (Schmitz 2023, 61-62).

In my view, to the contrary, wind is precisely that – a movement of air – whether felt by anyone or not. Air fills the sky; it is what we breathe, its currents, as they fold and moisturise, give us clouds and rain (Ingold 2015, 90). But whereas in my meteorology, feelings are materialised, in atmospheric aesthetics air is etherealised. There is weather in Schmitz's atmosphere, of course, but not as we would understand it. Perhaps, indeed, it has more in common with the scientific concept he rejects than meets the eye. Back in mission control, we could ask: is 'atmosphere' what the team is tracking with their instruments, or the buzz of excitement in the room? For scientific meteorologists, it would be the former; for aestheticians, the latter. But either way, the turbulence of the weather – the feeling for air – is left outside. Whether our concern be with the physics and aerodynamics of gaseous matter on the one hand, or human consciousness with its moods and motivations on the other, the two atmospheres of meteorology and aesthetics straddle the familiar dualities between nature and humanity, the material and the sensorial, cosmos and affect. What they have in common is a commitment to this kind of binary thinking. The challenge for us is to find a way beyond it. Instead of separating the realms of cosmos and affect, it is to bring them together, not as complementary opposites, but as a necessary synthesis.

### **5. Inversion and stagecraft**

How come, then, that atmosphere was so comprehensively dematerialised? Answering this question might help us chart a way to reverse the polarisation of matter and feeling, and to reunite the fields of meteorology and aesthetics. Part of the answer, I believe, lies in the early modern development of stagecraft, in which, for the first time, the world was recreated on an interior platform and viewed through a proscenium arch. This was a world brought indoors, where meteorological effects had to be simulated by means of props and pyrotechnics. Referring to the masques of the pioneering seventeenth century scenographer and

architect Inigo Jones, historical geographer Kenneth Olwig observes that whereas from classical Antiquity to the Elizabethan era, plays were performed in settings where the actor's shadow would be cast on the ground by the light of the sun, Jones's theatre established an 'interiorized landscape', creating the illusion of an expansive space extending to 'ethereal cosmic infinity' (Olwig 2011, 526). In effect, the open-air arena of classical theatre was turned outside in. In this inversion, as Olwig shows, air became ether, a kind of 'as if' air that filled the simulated 'as if' space behind the proscenium, where it was 'breathed' not by the actors themselves but by the characters they impersonated. As noted earlier, ether solves the paradox of matter that has escaped materiality, and by the same token, it allows the conflation of materiality and solidity to persist (Ingold 2015, 74-75).

Subsequently however, in the nascent endeavours or architecture and city planning, again masterminded by the irrepressible Jones, the world of the theatre was turned inside-out again, projecting on the outside the crafted space of the inside. The scenic façades of the theatrical production became the exterior façades of the theatre building itself, and of similarly ostentatious buildings in the vicinity. These monumental façades provided the backdrop, and the paved streets the stage, on which urbanites were expected to perform their roles. In its fullest extent, the entire world would become a stage – a solid surface on which life is enacted. This, as we have seen, is landscape in its modern sense, and its source lies the double inversion that first turns the world into theatre, and then turns the theatre into world. Critically, however, this second inversion did not undo the first, by restoring the world to how it was before. On the contrary, when stage and scenery were taken outside, the stage was still a stage, and the scenery still scenery. We can see, in this double inversion, a clear connection between the etherealization of the atmosphere, on the one hand, and the contraction of the material world into the solid forms of the landscape and its buildings on the other.

Through the double inversion effected by Jones and his contemporaries, inhabitants whose abode had lain in a world of earth and sky were cast out, exiled to the outward surface of the planetary globe. They became ex-habitants, «living all around on the outside», to borrow one characterisation of what is supposed to be the scientifically correct view of the matter (Vosniadou-

Brewer 1992, 541). The astrophysicist Arthur Stanley Eddington, writing in the 1930s, would describe this view as «a turning inside out of our familiar picture of the world» (Eddington 1935, 40). With philosopher Michel Serres, I take this operation of inversion to be the defining feature of modernity. According to Serres (2017, 132), modernity begins when the real world we inhabit (where we write our lines, and where the sun casts shadows on the ground) is taken as a scene, and this scene turns inside out, like the finger of a glove. This, then, is the view of the world from which both meteorological science and aesthetic philosophy have taken their respective bearings.

On the side of meteorology, an original fascination with meteors, as portents of the moral fate of mankind, gave way to a laboratory science centred on ‘atmosphere’ conceived as a laboratory writ large, in which the vagaries of weather could be subjected to measurement and calculation, and understood in terms of known physical forces acting in accordance with the laws of nature (Szerszynski 2010, 21). Weather was subsumed under climate, and redefined for scientific purposes as its localised manifestations (Simonetti 2019), while air lost its standing as an element of the inhabited world of earth and sky that we and other creatures breathe. It became merely matter in its gaseous phase. But aesthetics, taking the opposite path, followed the metaphorical extension of the term ‘atmosphere’, beginning in the eighteenth century, from the earth’s envelope of air to moods that are ‘in the air’. For the philosopher Gernot Böhme – who, along with Schmitz, has been among the most prominent recent advocates of atmospheric aesthetics – this extension has now become so routine that the original meteorological connotations of ‘atmosphere’ are as good as lost. And he is content to proceed without them (Böhme 2013, 2).

Böhme (1993, 121) thinks of atmospheres as spaces tintured by the radiations or ecstasies of things as they pour themselves out, or emanate, into the affective environment. They exude a haze-like aura or mood that can be ‘breathed’ by those who come within range, just as on stage, the *dramatis personae* ‘breathe’ the ether, Atmospheres, says Böhme, are intermediate between environmental qualities and human states – their perception is a matter of subjective experience, yet they are still felt to lie ‘out there’ as phenomena to which we are drawn and that take possession of us. Nevertheless, they are not free-floating like the

mist. On the contrary, they are generated from the very ways in which people and things are disposed vis-à-vis one another. On this specific point, Böhme's position departs from the view put forward by Schmitz. For Schmitz, an atmosphere fills the space in which people and things find themselves immersed, rather than emanating from them. It is always already there, hovering in the background, and has only to be 'awakened' to stir them up (Griffero 2023, 14, Schmitz 2023, 123-124). Böhme, by contrast, insists that atmospheres can be deliberately and artificially engineered, as in the theatre or cinema. It is no wonder, then, that he finds the most precise and paradigmatic instance of atmosphere in the stage set. «The art of generating atmospheres», he writes, «mirrors the theatricalization of our life» (Böhme 2013, 6). There could be no clearer statement of the connection between the atmosphere of aesthetics and the doubly inverted world of modernity, with its landscape and scenery.

## 6. Conclusion

In the modern world, all things are staged: politics, sport, the city, commodities, personalities, the self. But how can any feelingful encounter take place between persons and things without air to breathe? Aesthetics, as we have seen, has wholly divorced the sphere of affect from the sphere of the meteorological. To return to our earlier question: what would it take to bring these spheres together again? To achieve this, we would need a second inversion that would undo rather than extend and externalise the operation of the first, thereby restoring the world's inhabitants to the fullness of earth and sky. This would yield what Olwig (2011) has called an 'aerography', allowing people once again to breathe the air and to cast their own shadows in the light of the sun. And at the same time, it would release meteorology from its «technological incarceration» – the phrase is Szaizynski's (2010, 25) – within the cosmic laboratory to which science has given the name 'atmosphere'. In the un-inverted world of real life, immersion in the earth-sky world is a condition for – not a consequence of – sentient existence.

To arrive at a concept of atmosphere that satisfies this condition, we would need to find a sense of the term that is both affective and meteorological. The first step towards this, as I hope to have shown, must be to reintroduce the element of air. When Merleau-Ponty (1964, 167), for example, writes that in our

intercourse with the atmosphere, «there really is inspiration and expiration of Being», his words are meant literally, not metaphorically. There can be no distinction between the matter of air, going and out, and its spiritual or ethereal shadow. Inspiration is inhalation; expiration is exhalation. Breathing the air, moreover, we also perceive in the air: it is not just that we would suffocate without it; we would also be struck senseless (Ingold 2015, 67-68). Normally, we cannot see the air, though sometimes we can – as in the mist, or in rising smoke from fires and chimneys, or in light snow when flakes, in their feathery descent, pick out the delicate tracery of aerial currents. Yet it is precisely because of the transparency of this life-sustaining medium that we can see. In its vibrations, furthermore, air transmits sound waves, so that we can hear, and in the freedom of movement it affords, it allows us to touch (Gibson 1979, 16-17). That's why the atmosphere is a domain not only of air, but of tincture, sonority and feeling. It is «the space of the wind», write philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2004, 531), «the space of tactile and sonorous qualities». They call it 'smooth space'. This is the space of sentient becoming.

To conclude, I would like to return to the question of the relation between lines and the weather. Every living being, I have argued, stitches itself into the world along the interwoven lines of the meshwork. But every living being, too, is necessarily immersed in the atmosphere. Which of these, then, is the world we inhabit? When Merleau-Ponty (1968, 248-251) for example, in his later writings, talks about the 'flesh' of the world of which we are intrinsically a part, does he mean meshwork or atmosphere? The answer, I think, is alternately both. To live, all organisms respire. One way or another, they alternately inhale and exhale. Inhalation gathers the medium, holding it in tension. It is atmospheric. Exhalation releases the tension in issuing forth along a line of growth or becoming. It is a kind of feeling forward; let's call it 'haptic'. You could compare this alternation to the breast stroke in swimming, in which the backward sweep of the arms gathers the water in preparation for the forward thrust to follow (Ingold 2015, 87).

These movements are not the opposite of one another. They go not back and forth but round and round, such that the second movement finishes off the circuit initiated by the first, while preparing for the following cycle. It does not close the circuit,

however, since after every stroke the breathing body is always spatiotemporally further on. The world, in short, is atmospheric on the inhalation and haptic on the exhalation. The cycle, moreover, is not reversible: you can no more propel on the inhalation than gather on the exhalation. It is this irreversibility that gives rise to time. And the living, respiring being is the site where atmospheric immersion is transformed into the haptic extension of the meshwork along its many lines. It is where the weather is turned into the furrows of the ploughman, the wind into the wake of the sailboat, and sunlight into the stems and roots of the plant. It is a transformation, indeed, that is fundamental to all animate life.

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