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# LANDSCAPE – MORE THAN A MODE OF PERCEPTION. A CRITIQUE OF HERMANN SCHMITZ'S CONCEPTION OF LANDSCAPE

## 1. Introduction

Landscapes are not just the subject of outdated oil paintings from the last century. Rather, they play a central role today, as they are extremely important in the context of shaping a sustainable society and in the question of an adequate relationship between man and nature. For example, the design of the energy transition and the associated installation of wind turbines, solar parks or biogas plants are changing the 'image' of landscapes. The same applies to the way in which agriculture is practiced. Both areas, energy supply and agriculture, are key areas for the aforementioned transformation to sustainable societies. In addition, important experiences of the relationship between humans and nature can be made, particularly, in the perception of and interaction with landscapes. However, what is meant by 'landscape' must first be clarified.

I would like to take up and analyze a suggestion by Hermann Schmitz that has received little attention to date. Landscapes are paradigm cases for a theory of atmospheres like that of Hermann Schmitz. There are several atmospheres which can be experienced in a landscape – some of them describes Schmitz himself in the following passage<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> Yet, the peaceful, calming and as such positive atmosphere which he depicts stands in harsh contrast to landscapes with negative atmosphere, which have become more and more prominent in recent years: we can think of the cleared landscape of a brown coal open cut mining, of flooded landscapes where everything is covered in mud, or of black charred tree stumps stretching to the horizon after yet another forest fire. This should make it clear to us that a theory of atmospheres should also be able to consider and analyze negative aesthetic experiences. Other theorist have also made efforts to theoretically account for the mostly negative effects of the ecological crisis from an aesthetic viewpoint,

A serene, gentle region can be just as beautiful as [...] the quiet, solemnly serious peace of the forest with towering trees in changing, rather dull light, and a quiet, clear mountain lake in the wreath of forests and heights no less than a lively, picturesque brook trickling over mossy stones. (Schmitz 2018, 489).

Though, landscape is rather seldomly picked out explicitly as a central theme in his work. An exception is his article *Landscape as a Mode of Perception* in which he argues that something becomes a landscape not by belonging to so-called nature, but by a specific mode of perception. This detachment of the landscape from nature also finds supporters in the current discourse. The position is in line with other 'end-of-nature thinkers' (Jóhannesdóttir-Thorgeirsdóttir 2016) like Timothy Morton (2007) or Steven Vogel (2015) to name just some of the most prominent ones. It might even include a certain danger to completely detach the conception of notion from the notion of nature, if one looks at current positions such as that of Jens Andermann: very roughly put, Andermann concludes from the end of nature (Andermann 2018, 2023), in a second step, the 'end of landscape' (Andermann 2023) as well.

I will critically analyze Schmitz's conception of landscape<sup>2</sup> and argue that landscape is more than a mode of perception: the aspect of naturalness must also be given. The argument I present offers thus a critique of a conception of landscape which is detached from nature, but it could be extended to a more general argument against the end of nature.<sup>3</sup>

I will start by summing up Schmitz's conception of landscape, according to which landscape is that which gives rise to bodily communication with vastness and that is to excorporation, and differentiate between two forms of excorporation, namely framed and coalesced excorporation. Secondly, I will lay down that, following Schmitz, the specific function of the landscape is that it enables recreation by leaving behind corporeal contraction. Thirdly, I will critically analyze his position: Schmitz's conception of landscape is incomplete, as becomes clear by a comparison

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see e.g. the introduction into a special issue on this topic by Mikkonen-Lehtinen (2022) and the other articles in this volume.

<sup>2</sup> I will mostly refer on this article, but also take thematically related passages from other publications of Schmitz into account. Here and in the following, all translations of Schmitz's work are by me.

<sup>3</sup> I tried to offer such an argument against the end of nature elsewhere (Meyer forthcoming).

between the view of a city and that on a landscape – vastness belongs to both, but that doesn't make the first one a landscape. It is necessary to include the concept of nature to his conception of landscape. This would also help to dissolve Schmitz' approach from a fixation on the visual sense and thus, on classical aesthetics.

## 2. Schmitz's conception of landscape

Schmitz argues «that something becomes landscape not by belonging to so-called nature, nor by a special aesthetic-sentimental attitude, but by a certain mode of perception» (Schmitz 2014, 109)<sup>4</sup>. He understands perception as bodily communication and locates the specific of landscape in the shift «from encorporation to excorporation» (Schmitz 2014, 121)<sup>5</sup>. «Landscape is then determined as the medium of (moderate, not in the extreme sense of self-forgetfulness [...] excorporation» (Schmitz 2014, 127). His hypothesis thus breaks with the traditional view that landscape is one form of appearance of nature or that it is the product of an aesthetic-subjective attitude in which a sentient observer views an area shaped by nature (and sometimes humans) within the framework of culturally shaped patterns of perception as a harmonious, individual whole (Kirchhoff 2012). Following Schmitz, something gains the status of a landscape if it enables *excorporation* which means «bodily communication with [...] vastness» (Schmitz 2014, 117). This kind of bodily communication is possible with a landscape because *vastness* is (almost) always part of it (Schmitz 2014, 121). To better understand Schmitz's conception of landscape, we should take a closer look at the crucial terms *excorporation* and *vastness*.

I won't be able to go into detail regarding Schmitz's phenomenology of the lived body, and therefore I will have to presuppose at least a rough knowledge of it. Very roughly put, he assumes that a corporeal dynamic between contraction (*Engung*) and expansion (*Weitung*) arises from the fact that every human being has a lived body and this dynamic in turn generates corporeal communication. It exists in two forms: *encorporation* on the one

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<sup>4</sup> Earlier on, in System III,2, he defines landscape as «an unenclosed space that fills the entire field of vision and is completely or partially closed off from the ground at the bottom» where objective emotions exist (Schmitz 1969, 397). Here, as well, he avoids a reference to nature to explain what landscape is.

<sup>5</sup> I translate *Einleibung* with 'encorporation', and *Ausleibung* with 'excorporation' – following Griffero (2019).

hand and excorporation on the other hand; both can take place between corporeal beings and other entities. The second one, excorporation, is crucial for our quest to understand Schmitz's conception of landscape. It takes place «when *privative expansion* is split off from the swelling, the expansiveness bound to constriction in the vital drive, and the constriction is pulled along into form- and dimensionless expansiveness» (Schmitz 2014, 117)<sup>6</sup>. Here it becomes clear that excorporation and vastness are inextricably connected – since excorporation is itself corporeal vastness, or *ex negativo*: the loosening of pressure and the dissolution of narrowness (*Enge*). Schmitz understands vastness in the colloquial way of something where the gaze can lose itself, that is, an area which is very vast and seems to have almost no boundaries (Schmitz 2014, 121). It is quite obvious that landscape is connected with vastness in this sense since landscape usually means a spacious natural area which extends with (almost) no limits in front of a person. We can differentiate between two different forms of excorporation, even though Schmitz himself doesn't do so explicitly. I propose to distinguish between 1) 'framed excorporation' and 2) 'coalesced excorporation'.

### 2.1. Framed excorporation

I propose to call the moderate form of excorporation 'framed excorporation': it doesn't dissipate into exorbitant vastness, but rather stays concentrated, which is possible by being connected with one-sided encorporation. To ensure that excorporation does not lead too far so that the person loses herself in the perception of the landscape, a 'frame'<sup>7</sup> is necessary «that gives the view into the wide, relieving guidance» (Schmitz 2014, 123). In terms of cultural history, exorbitant vastness was once perceived as threatening and

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<sup>6</sup> Expansiveness as a central characteristic of landscape is also reflected in the formulations by means of which we try to express our experiences of landscape: 'I was able to respire', 'I let my gaze wander', 'I recharged my batteries', 'it straightened me up again' might be cited as examples. Respiring expands the abdominal and chest area and is often accompanied by a physical uprightness – like the recharging of batteries which is connected with the idea that something that was previously empty, limp and collapsed fills up again, expands and straightens up. Letting the gaze wander also usually entails a widening: the subject is not fixed on a narrow point but scans the extended surroundings with his gaze.

<sup>7</sup> Schmitz introduces his idea of framed seeing already in System III,4. Cf. Schmitz (1977, 292-299).

unpleasant; only by limiting it the landscape was able to assume its relieving function (Schmitz 2014, 122 f.). The requested limitation can be guaranteed by the subjects themselves by looking at landscapes in a certain mode: they must look *as if* there was a frame through which they perceive the surrounding landscape<sup>8</sup>. This framed seeing works as a protection from slipping into exorbitant vastness: the person is connected with the perceived landscape in a *one-sided encorporation*, the perceiving person is the passive encorporated partner which is confined to the dominant partner, that is, the landscape ( Schmitz 2011, 38). My understanding of Schmitz is that he wants to say that by looking at the landscape 'through a frame' one focuses more on the details whereby a contraction of the lived body is held up in the vital drive. During the experience of that landscape, the person is still aware that it is she who perceives this very landscape, that is she who adjusts it with the imaginative frame in a certain way.

Figuratively speaking, one-sided encorporation represents the anchor that holds the subject in the here and now and enables her to enjoy the wide view from the deck of the ship on the landscape that leads to the excorporation at all. Without this anchor, the subject would be overcome by a fear of the seemingly endless vastness. That excorporation is complemented with one-sided encorporation – or with other words: that the anchor is aboard – is being ensured by framed vision, which, as a habitual ability, perceives the landscape in appropriately trimmed pieces ( Schmitz 2014, 127), small enough to prevent a dissolution and the emergence of fear given the exorbitant vastness and at the same time large enough to still enable bodily communication with the vastness and that is, excorporation.

## 2.2. Coalesced excorporation

The moderate form of excorporation, which I called framed excorporation because of the importance of framing vision for it, is juxtaposed by Schmitz with a second more radical form, which I will call 'coalesced excorporation'. Here, excorporation comes «as fusion, as absorption» which Schmitz also calls «*unio mystica*»

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<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, in the 18th century aids such as the *Claude glass* were common to generate precisely this impression of framed vision. The Claude glass was a small convex mirror in which one could look in order to see the landscape behind oneself in the frame of the mirror. The mirror was tinted so that the colors of the landscape were subtly toned and a certain picturesque aesthetic was evoked.

(Schmitz 2014, 128). Despite the occasional titling of this form of excorporation as «*unio mystica*» and the Christian coinage of this term, the cases of this second form of excorporation described by Schmitz do not refer to a union of man and God, but to a union of man and landscape. Therefore, to avoid misunderstandings, I would like to refer to this form of excorporation not with reference to *unio mystica*, but as coalesced excorporation.

It is characterized by a suspension of the subject-object-opposition: in the contemplation of the landscape, the subject merges with it into a unity. There is an absolutely unsplittable relationship between the subject and the landscape, which means that while this relationship exists, the subject is not able to partially detach itself from it through external relations (Schmitz 2014, 129 f.). For example, the subject cannot at the same time think about what else it wants to have for dinner; the relation to the landscape is absolute insofar as during the duration of its existence both or at least one of the participants are incapable of any further relations (Schmitz 2014, 129 f.). This makes it clear how coalescence can occur: everything else except the participants involved in the relationship is blanked out, the focus lies undivided on the partner of the absolutely unsplittable relationship – in our case, on the perceived landscape.

With Konrad Ott, the coalesced excorporation could also be understood in terms of a «transaesthetic experience» in which not merely the natural beautiful, but at the same time something 'more' is perceived (Ott 2013, 26). Especially the fifth type of argumentation which Ott presents in order to explain such transaesthetic experiences fits particularly well with the coalesced excorporation described by Schmitz: the experience of something 'more' than just the natural beauty indicates that the subject-object dichotomy is transcended. «The 'more/else' refers not to nature itself but to some basic existential structure of human 'Dasein' (M. Heidegger) which 'is' with/in nature before it becomes a knowing subject, a moral person, and a culturally shaped individual» (Ott 2013, 31). Between Schmitz's coalesced excorporation and Ott's transaesthetic experience in the sense of this reading, the parallel is striking in that in both, reference is made to the dissolution of the subject-object dichotomy. In Ott, we find an even deeper explanation of what constitutes the condition of the possibility of such a dissolution and thus of experiences of this kind: human beings are first 'with/in nature' that is, before man develops his full

personhood or becomes an individual (and even then, though to a modified degree), he is part of nature. Man is in natural environments, and with other natural beings and entities (Ott 2013, 31). The coalesced excorporation described by Schmitz is based on this primary affiliation of man with nature. In the fusion of coalesced excorporation, we can concretize with Ott, a «'flashback' [...] to a more elementary and brute experience» takes place – a momentary return to the state of being part of (in the sense of «being with/in nature») nature. «In such experience the human reaches a level of being human in which she 'is' less than a subject, less than a person, and less than an individual» (Ott 2013, 31).

Both forms of excorporation, the framed excorporation on the one hand and the fused excorporation on the other, contribute, according to Schmitz, to the well-being of human beings. I will now turn to the analysis of the function of landscapes.

### **3. The function of landscape**

Schmitz thinks that we enjoy spending time in the landscape so much because we can experience relief there: the subject is relieved from everyday stress, which can be seen as a corporeal contraction. In «ordinary life» we are «caught up in confusing demands» and constantly have to deal «with all kinds of things» (Schmitz 2014, 121). We are confronted with the «entangling encorporation of having-to-do with the encountering and the distressing» (Schmitz 2014, 122). Thus, everyday life is often characterized by «scattered» and «changing applications» by «facets of the rush» as well as a «short breath» (Schmitz 2014, 122). What Schmitz describes here can also be summarized with Hartmut Rosa as the experience of a constant «acceleration» of our lives (Rosa 2009). This acceleration – or in Schmitz's words: the things that press us, the rapid change, the confusion and distraction, the numerous demands drive us into a corner. This is also underlined by the image of entanglement, which Schmitz uses twice: man is tightly bound, he is constricted<sup>9</sup>. We can thus say that Schmitz's starting point is a corporeal contraction that occurs because of stress.

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<sup>9</sup> The fact that stress is accompanied by a bodily constriction also becomes clear when looking at the linguistic expressions that are usually used to describe the experience of stress: 'I am under pressure', 'it has knocked me down', 'it is constricting my throat', 'I am carrying a heavy load on my shoulders' and many

The liberation from this corporeal contraction and the experience of vastness are made possible by the stay in a landscape. If the stressed person goes into the landscape, she can leave her stress-related corporeal contraction behind and instead experience corporeal vastness. As we have seen before, the specific of landscape is exactly that it enables corporeal communication with vastness and that is excorporation.

In excorporation there is a «de-differentiation of all forms and species», one can experience «absolute impressions with an intensity» that «is not otherwise attainable» (Schmitz 2014, 119). In coalesced excorporation, it can even go as far as the experience of «self-loss» (Schmitz 2014, 119). Here, Schmitz describes the experiences of heightened intensity, the detachment from time and place, as well as moments of forgetting oneself. Such an experience can occur, for example, when I lie comfortably in a meadow on a beautiful summer's day and completely engage with the sensual impressions of my surroundings: feeling the balmy wind, perceiving the warmth of the day, smelling the scent of the sprouting summer meadow below me (Schmitz 2014, 119). Whereas in everyday life the subject rushes from one thing to the next, in the experience of the landscape she can sink into the moment and immerse himself completely in the impressions (Schmitz 2014, 121). In the landscape, the preoccupation with many rapidly changing tasks and things in everyday life is replaced by a de-differentiation, which is equivalent to a «liberation» of the subject from the «small details» of everyday life (Schmitz 2014, 121). According to Schmitz, this is the reason why «landscape can heal» (Schmitz 2014, 122)<sup>10</sup>.

Regarding the differentiation between the two forms of excorporation, framed excorporation on the one hand and coalesced excorporation on the other hand, we have to note that the mentioned experiences of heightened intensity, the detachment from time and place, as well as moments of forgetting oneself are especially present in the second form of excorporation. Since the

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more. In all these formulations, bodily states are described, which – partly with reference to specific bodily islands such as the throat or the shoulders – give voice to an experience of constriction, of being squeezed together.

<sup>10</sup> This idea is intensively discussed in the field of so called 'therapeutic landscapes'. For a good overview of the discussion see the contributions in Gebhard-Kistemann (2016).



framed excorporation comes along with onesided encorporation and thus still includes a partly narrowness and connection to the entity with which it is encorporated (*eingeleibt*). In framed excorporation, the person tries to assure that the impressions of the landscape do not become too overwhelming and that she maintains her composure (*Fassung*). She wants to preserve her personal emancipation whereas in coalesced excorporation, a regression into primitive presence takes place. It is this regression into primitive presence which comes along with the detachment from time and place, it is pure here and now. With regard to Dilthey's dissolution of the subject-object opposition, Schmitz writes: «At the laid coffee table or in view of a horse-drawn carriage (the automobile of his time), the melting into an impression would not have been so immediately apparent to him. The landscape invites it» (Schmitz 2014, 128). This applies equally to Schmitz's own position: landscape invites persons to the dissolution of the subject-object opposition, amongst others by experiencing atmospheres in the landscape which themselves transcend the opposition between the subjective and objective. Aesthetically perceiving the landscape (or something else in nature) is always a perception from within and not, as Schmitz suggests with the notion of framed seeing, from without. Arnold Berleant has therefore coined the term of 'engaged aesthetics': «Perceiving environment from within, as it were, looking not *at* it but being *in* it, nature becomes something quite different. It is transformed into a realm in which we live as participants, not observers» (Berleant 2004, 83). Schmitz can't fully explain what the condition of the possibility is for transcending the opposition between subject and object, or, in the words of Berleant, for the engagement of the human being with landscape. This brings me to my critique of Schmitz's conception of landscape.

#### 4. A critique of Schmitz's conception of landscape

##### 4.1. City and landscape: vastness is not enough

Schmitz claims that we can conceptualize landscape by pointing to a certain mode of perception solely. Even though the detailed analysis of the corporeal dynamic which comes along with the perception of the landscape he developed is fruitful and important, it is not enough. Other than Schmitz thinks, the aspect of naturalness must also be given for a full-blown conception of

landscape. I will first show why the reference to vastness is not enough, before I will then turn to the necessary notion of nature.

If one asks whether landscape can clearly be distinguished from other things, such as the city, based on Schmitz conception, I think that the answer is no<sup>11</sup>. In every city there is at least one tall building which towers above the rest of the city: think of the Eiffel Tower in Paris or the Milad Tower in Tehran. If you climb on these buildings, you have a good view over large parts of the city from the top. You can let your gaze wander over the surrounding buildings, streets and city dwellers: thus, with Schmitz, we have reason to speak of bodily communication with vastness and, as a consequence, a shift from encorporation to excorporation. However, he had nevertheless called this the «specificity of landscape performance» (Schmitz 2014, 121). The doubt about Schmitz's characterization of landscape intensifies if we additionally consider staring into sheen, which is, following him, one of the most important occasions for excorporation (Schmitz 2014, 118 f.). Especially in the city, a multitude of lights exist; sheen can thus be found in many urban areas. The restless flashing of neon signs, traffic warning signs, or the like may not be counted among them since these constantly seek to draw the attention to something new and thereby prevent the self-loss through their lack of constancy. But the view of the nightly illuminated city from a high perspective, such as the aforementioned high building, and the soft glow of the electric sea of lights seem to very well give opportunity for excorporation through the hypnotic effect of the shining city lights.

Thus, there has to be something more about landscape than just the fact that it leads to a shift of corporeal communication towards excorporation. What is the difference between perceiving, for example, the urban surroundings from the Milad Tower and perceiving the beautiful mountain landscape of the Damavand with

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<sup>11</sup> My focus lies on the conception of 'landscape'. It might be worthwhile, yet, to deal with the conception of the 'city' and 'urban landscape' as well. During the last years, philosophy of the city has emerged as a new research field which is constantly growing. Important earlier contributions to this field come from Jürgen Hasse (2012, 2016). There have been several special issues on the philosophy of city, see Klonschinski-Müller-Salo (2021) and the other articles of this special issue as well as Lehtinen-Lobo (2022) and the other articles of this special issue. There even exists a journal which is dedicated to the philosophy of the city since 2023. Cf. Lethinen *et al.* (2023).

the wonderfully smelling poppies and the gentle wind? The answer seems to be quite obvious, yet Schmitz denies it: the difference is that the Damavand and all the perceived aspects of this landscape are natural, whereas the Teheranian surroundings are man-made. Or in other words: while the first one is a natural environment, the latter one is a built environment. Both provide the experiencing subject with vastness and thus open the possibility for a corporeal communication with vastness, thus for excorporation. Nevertheless, we would only want to call the first one a landscape, whereas this is not the case with the second one. I think this is indeed because of its «belonging to so-called nature», which Schmitz wanted to keep at arm's length (Schmitz 2014, 109)<sup>12</sup>.

#### **4.2. Nature as the self-acting given: a phenomenological conception of nature**

Even though the question of what nature is has prevailed since the beginning of philosophy, it keeps being a difficult one. For our purposes, it seems especially fitting to look out for a phenomenological understanding of nature. Schmitz himself has never dealt in depth with 'nature' – there are only some letters to Gernot Böhme, with whom he discussed this topic, and one manuscript on the possibility of a philosophy of nature<sup>13</sup> – mostly because he is (as already becomes clear by his talk of «so-called nature») very skeptical of the fruitfulness of this concept. I think he did so wrongfully, as his conception of landscapes makes clear. It is possible to develop a phenomenological understanding of nature which is neither metaphysic nor falls prey to natural scientific

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<sup>12</sup> A similar objection can be raised against Tonino Griffero's account of landscape: in line with Schmitz, he highlights the atmospherical affordances of an «aesthetic-environmental segmentation we call landscape» (Griffero 2017, 60). Analyzing the commonalities of landscape and atmosphere, he states that they «do not exist in the same way as cats and tables – that is, detached three-dimensional objects». However, he overlooks the fact that landscape differs from atmosphere at least in the sense that it always consists of natural entities (just as the central difference between cats and tables is that only the former belongs to nature). He comes close to the importance of the concept of nature for an adequate conception of the landscape when he talks about its ecological affordances and their variability based on «physical reasons» such as «natural chemical changes of greening, ripening, flowering and fading» – but unfortunately does not consider the concept of nature addressed here any further.

<sup>13</sup> The letters as well as Schmitz manuscript have been published only recently, see Meyer (2022).

reductions. In the lines of Gernot Bohme's account, who developed Schmitz neophenomenological ideas further and included the idea of nature, we can understand nature as the *self-acting given* (cf. Meyer 2022). Therefore, human beings are nature themselves because their lived body is also something self-acting given (Böhme 2002, 108). Understanding nature as something that is given is a *locus classicus* which can already be found with Aristoteles (2019) and his famous differentiation between *physis* and *techné*, that is, between what exists by nature and that what is man-made (*Physik*, 35). Nature is, following Böhme, self-acting in the sense that every natural entity ecstatically emerges from itself and presents itself for the other entities: it does so by its color, shape, smell, sound, movement, act, or as Böhme points out by exuding a certain atmosphere (Böhme 1992, 131). As corporeal beings, we can experience the so-called external nature, landscapes, natural beings and entities, by perceiving this very atmosphere they impress.

Perceiving the quiet, solemnly serious peace of the forest with towering trees in changing, rather dull light or a lively, picturesque brook trickling over mossy stones is at the same time the perception of one's own naturalness as a corporeal being. This also highlights the specificity of landscape because it is not possible to make this experience in a man-made environment as, to take an example, which Schmitz uses himself, in an impressive lofty hall (cf. Schmitz 2011, 15 f.)<sup>14</sup>.

#### **4.3. Detachment from the visual sense and classical aesthetics**

Besides the missing notion of nature in Schmitz's conception of landscape and the consequential missing differentiation between the view of a city, it has a second problematic aspect. The perception of landscape in Schmitz's account is fixed on the visual sense, while the other aesthetic (in the sense of the ancient Greek term *aisthesis*, which means the theory of sensual and bodily experiences) approaches to nature are disregarded. Although Schmitz briefly addresses the hearing and smelling modes of perception (Schmitz 2014, 127), he devotes most of the text to the

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<sup>14</sup> Even though Schmitz makes the mistake to equate the experience of this hall with a high forest, pointing to the fact that both evocate a corporeal expansion – but ignoring the qualitative difference between the forest being natural and the hall being man-made.

optical perception of landscape. This one-sided fixation is particularly striking since he quotes text passages by Hedwig Conrad-Martius and Annette von Droste-Hülshoff which deal with a greater abundance of the perception of nature: Conrad-Martius, for example, speaks of a complete looseness that occurs when only «the wind that plays around me, the warmth that envelops me, the scent that enters me» are felt (Conrad-Martius, in Schmitz 2014, 119), thereby emphasizing tactile (wind and warmth) as well as olfactory (scent) perception. Droste-Hülshoff also emphasizes olfactory («the fragrant breath of herbs around you») and, in addition, auditory elements («sweet laughter breaks in waves, loved voices whisper and drift») in the perception of nature (Droste-Hülshoff, in Schmitz 2014, 132). However, these multiple references to approaches to nature that are not visual, but instead focus on smelling, tasting, hearing, and feeling nature, are not adequately taken up by Schmitz. In this sense it is appropriate to say that Schmitz account of landscape falls (at least partially) prey to the oculocentric-frontalist-distal prejudice. And this disregard of the other senses besides the visual sense and the thereby connected oculocentric-frontalistic-distal prejudice to which Schmitz account falls prey show that it is entangled in classical aesthetics.

The distanced attitude, which is a central characteristic of classical aesthetics is reflected in Schmitz' almost exclusively visual approach to landscape as an always distanced mode of perception. His formulation that man confronts the sight of the landscape «with as much latitude and distance as belongs to enjoyment» (Schmitz 2014, 127) is also telling here. The separation between man and nature in framed encorporation also becomes evident in the examples Schmitz uses to explain framed vision: he cites the view from a car or train window as well as from the window of a house (Schmitz 2014, 123 f.). In these examples, the perceiving subject is not in the landscape itself, but is separated from it and encapsulated in a technical or cultural product from which it looks at the landscape. Like that, the subject can only make an impoverished perception of the landscape since its perception is limited to a single sense. Yet an approach to the landscape that includes the multiple bodily senses as well as the corporeal impulses (*Regungen*) would have the potential for the perceiving subject to perceive something else in addition to the beautiful and restful landscape: namely, his or her own belonging to nature, his

or her own being-in-nature as a corporeal being (Böhme 1992, 77; Böhme 2019). However, Schmitz leaves this possibility of self-knowledge as well as the enjoyment of nature in all its diversity as a contribution to the good life of man unused.

The fact that Schmitz theory of landscape falls prey to the oculocentric-frontalist-distal prejudice and mostly disregards other-than-visual senses is especially surprising and open to criticism because, at the same time, he can be seen as the one who highlighted more than any other theorist the importance of atmospheres and thereby contributed very much to the shift from a mode of perception which is limited to visual perception to a broader conception of perception which included the corporeal impulses in the encounter with the affecting. Against this background, my claim that Schmitz's conception of landscape is oculocentric-frontalistic-distanced might seem at first sight counterintuitive: given the fact that Schmitz explicitly formulates an aesthetics, which is only partly concerned with the beautiful and the sublime, and that is with the traditional topics of this discipline, but rather wants to include everything which corporeally affects human beings (Schmitz 1980, 406). This corporeally affecting includes, for example, «the murmur in the forest, the dispersion of the fog, strange illuminations and sounds, voices, glances, midday silence, etc.» (Schmitz 1980, 406). In this enumeration, not only visual but also auditory, sensory and synesthetic phenomena are included. It becomes obvious that Schmitz wants aesthetics to include atmospheres or more generally: that which affects us corporeally. Also, his attempt to characterize landscape as a particular, corporeally-mediated mode of perception is obviously concerned with transcending classical aesthetics, at least in the sense that corporeal relations are included and valorized. Nevertheless, it must be stated that Schmitz's conception of landscape doesn't live up to his own demands of aesthetics: in his theory of landscape, he is wrongfully fixed on (mostly) visual phenomena and ignores the other approaches to landscapes, especially the integral corporeal impulses.

## 5. Conclusion

Looking from the Milad Tower on the lively streets of Tehran, perceiving the smell and sound of the city below my feet and seeing the vastness of the urban environment is something completely different than looking from a hill on the poppies bowing under the

wind which comes from the top of Mount Damavand, perceiving the smell and sound of the landscape around me. Applied to Schmitz's conception of landscape, this finding means that it is not enough to understand landscape as a certain mode of perception, namely corporeal communication with vastness, which enables excorporation, but that it is rather necessary to furthermore include the notion of nature. With the words of Eduard Kaeser, we could say that landscape is «nature in its aesthetic condition» (Kaeser 1999, 124). In this quote, both aspects which seem crucial to me for an adequate understanding of 'landscape' come together: on the one hand, the aesthetic quality of the respective landscape, namely its atmosphere(s) which we can experience corporeally-sensually when being present in this very landscape. On the other hand, the landscape's affiliation to nature, which may be present to varying degrees – a landscape that is mostly used for agriculture is more heavily shaped by humans than a landscape in a biosphere reserve – but must nevertheless always be taken into account.<sup>15</sup>

I argued that a conception of landscape which includes only the first of the two above mentioned aspects of landscape, as we find it in Hermann Schmitz's work, is not enough. I furthermore sketched out a phenomenological conception of nature, building on Gernot Böhmes understanding of nature as the self-acting given, which also includes human beings due to their corporeality. The aim was to show that an understanding of landscape, which includes not only aesthetic qualities but also a reference to nature, is possible from a phenomenological perspective. In this respect, the account which I have developed and defended here stands in the tradition of Hermann Schmitz, but goes beyond his position. I think that the conception of landscape which I developed here and which includes both aspects has three advantages of Schmitz's account: first, it is thereby possible to demonstrate what is the difference between e.g. the city and the landscape or, put differently, what is the specificity of landscape. Second, we are in a position to explain how the dissipation of the subject-object-dichotomy, which takes

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<sup>15</sup> In the debates of nature conservation, the concept of «hemeroby» is common. It indicates the influence of humans on the respective landscape in gradations between closeness to and remoteness from nature (see Kowarik 1999, Walz-Stein 2014). I think that ecophenomenology in particular can benefit from such a concept of gradual influences of humans on nature, because the experiences in a 'forested' forest are different from those in a primary forest, the phenomenology of gardening is different from that of sailing – to name just a few examples.

place in coalesced excorporation, is possible or what exactly happens there. And third, all senses are being included and the atmospheres in the landscape are taken seriously.

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