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**MUSIC AS ATMOSPHERE.  
LINES OF BECOMING IN CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP**

As I enter through the doorway, I am received by the faint noises of muted bodies. People are seated in separated rows according to gender. I find a place in the female block at the back of the assembly hall. In front of me there are lines of backs, women neatly dressed up in skirts, their heads covered with elegant scarfs. I try not to move. At the front of the room, men and boys have gathered around a table on which a loaf of bread and a jar of wine are covered by a white cloth.

The silence is made overwhelmingly present by the restraint of coughing and the hasty exit of a woman attempting to subdue her unruly infant. The silence resounds, waiting for my hushed participation. In this calmness, thoughts, feelings, and affections unfold their lines of flight as we emerge within the tranquillity. Minutes elapse. It is the voice of a man that interrupts the silence by proposing a song to sing. Following his request black bound hymnals are opened and throats are cleared. The song, identified by a number, appears in black on white sheet music with multiple vocal parts. A man in the centre of the room raises his head and strikes up the hymn in a penetrating voice. It takes only a few notes until the whole assembly materialises within the four part harmony as voices and bodies become musically dependent and form a sensational whole – a spiritual whole – a denominational whole.

In this paper<sup>1</sup> I explore the notion of atmosphere through a case study of congregational musicking<sup>2</sup>. I suggest that the evol-

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<sup>1</sup>This paper is the result of a seminal and inspiring research collaboration with Simon Runkel, who conducted two of the quoted interviews and with whom the ethnographic observations and conceptual frameworks were discussed and evaluated. I would like to thank Birgit Abels, Charissa Granger and Férdia J. Stone-Davis for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> See C. Small, *Musicking: the meanings of performing and listening*, Hanover, University Press of New England, 1998.

ving concept of atmosphere can provide new ways of understanding and describing music and musical practices in religious settings.

In particular, I argue that an understanding of the worship service as atmosphere can further our insight into denominational difference and processes of communitisation<sup>3</sup> that reach beyond the religious '-ologies' which are traditionally understood to be essential to the formation of and adherence to denominations: theology, ecclesiology or eschatology. Ensuing from an analysis of Closed Brethren discourse in the first part of this paper, I will examine some notions of the unsayable in respect to musical, spiritual, and atmospheric experiences. Even though the ineffability of atmospheric experiences has already been widely discussed<sup>4</sup> and marks a common starting point in the various atmospherologies, I contend that it substantiates and justifies the linking of the musical and the atmospheric not only on a phenomenological level but conceptually as well in regard to a broader history of these concepts and their epistemes.

The theoretical groundwork for the discussion of ontological approaches to atmospheres in part two is provided by the German philosophers Hermann Schmitz<sup>5</sup> and Gernot Böhme<sup>6</sup>. I will bring these into conversation with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari<sup>7</sup>. By combining conceptual reflections and ethnographic accounts in part three and four, I will centre my argument on what I consider to be two atmospheric momentums: *becoming*

<sup>3</sup> «Communitisation», a translation from the German term *Vergemeinschaftung*, a concept introduced by Max Weber, refers to the process of affective community formation where «social action [...] is based on a subjective feeling of the parties, whether affectual or traditional, that they belong together» (M. Weber, *The theory of social and economic organization*, transl. by Talcott Parsons, New York, Free Press, 1964, p. 136).

<sup>4</sup> Anderson, Böhme, and Schmitz.

<sup>5</sup> H. Schmitz, *Situationen und Atmosphären. Zur Ästhetik und Ontologie bei Gernot Böhme*, in G. Böhme et al. (hrsgg.), *Naturerkenntnis und Natursein. Für Gernot Böhme*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1998; H. Schmitz, *Die Verwaltung der Gefühle in Theorie, Macht und Phantasie*, in C. Benthien - A. Fleig - I. Kasten (hrsgg.), *Emotionalität. Zur Geschichte der Gefühle*, Literatur, Kultur, Geschlecht. Kleine Reihe Bd. 16, Köln, Böhlau, 2000, pp. 42-59; H. Schmitz - R.O. Müllan - J. Slaby, *Emotions outside the box. The new phenomenology of feeling and corporeality*, «Phenomenology and the cognitive sciences» 10/2 (2011), pp. 241-259.

<sup>6</sup> G. Böhme, *Atmosphere as the fundamental concept of a new aesthetics*, «Thesis Eleven» 36/1 (1993), pp. 113-126; G. Böhme, *Anmutungen. Über das Atmosphärische*, Ostfildern vor Stuttgart, Edition Tertium, 1998; G. Böhme, *Atmosphäre. Essays zur neuen Ästhetik*, Berlin, Suhrkamp, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> G. Deleuze - F. Guattari, *A thousand plateaus. Capitalism and schizophrenia*, tr. by B. Massumi, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press - Continuum, 2004.

and *territorialisation* which are linked to two atmospheric forces, that is, *smoothing* (process of intensive becoming) and *striating* (process of stratification)<sup>8</sup>.

The case study on which this paper focuses is the Sunday worship service of Closed Brethren Assemblies in Germany, a community that has its ecclesiological roots in the 1850s revival movement of the Plymouth Brethren in England. Due to the efforts of John Nelson Darby and Karl Brockhaus (1822-1899) in Elberfeld, this congregational form established itself in Germany around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>9</sup>. The rejection of institutionalised churches and hierarchical structures, on the basis of which Closed Brethren still dissociate themselves from other groupings, is also inscribed in the practices of the denomination's worship services.

Without following a pre-set liturgy, without a stage or an appointed worship leader, without even the authority of a pastor, worship services on Sunday mornings are contingent as they unfold and take shape extemporaneously, culminating each week in Holy Communion. During the worship time, which typically lasts about sixty to ninety minutes, scriptures are read, prayers are uttered out loud by individual men and hymns are collectively sung from the hymnal *Kleine Sammlung Geistlicher Lieder*<sup>10</sup> in four-part harmony and without accompanying instrumentation.

### **The unsayable**

Closed Brethren maintain an elaborate doctrinal discourse about music. As it became clear in interviews and informal discussions, individuals have well-developed ideas about what music *is* and what it *does*, that is, how it influences the worshiper. Musical phenomena were analysed in regard to their emotional and physical effects and in relation to Closed Brethren conceptions of man as consisting of spirit, soul and body, and hence moralised respectively as good, bad or neutral. One interviewee expressed this common idea in Closed Brethren discourse as follows:

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<sup>8</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> F. Riedel - S. Runkel, *Understanding churchscapes. Theology geography and music of the Closed Brethren in Germany*, in S. Brunn (ed.), *The changing world religion map. Sacred places, identities, practices and politics*, New York, Springer, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> *Small Collection of Spiritual Songs*, 2012.

Spirit<sup>11</sup>, soul<sup>12</sup>, and body, in a top-down order – this isn't new to me: the words are for the spirit, the melody is for the soul, and the rhythm is for the body (Int. 2, 10.07.12)<sup>13</sup>.

With reference to this framework, believers evaluated music with regard to its moral potency and hence its suitability for congregational worship. Music that was perceived as being merely emotional or rhythm-heavy thus emphasising the corporeal, indeed the carnal, was regarded as morally hazardous. It was postulated repeatedly that musical textures ought to be subordinated to lyrics, the element that is considered to be most central to both private and congregational worship. Worship thus was defined as the «act of addressing the one who is spirit and truth» and «offering to him his Son» who is the «incarnate word», and «continues to reveal himself through the scriptures» (Int. 2, 10.07.12).

It is with *words*, which are believed to correspond to the spirit (mind), that the worshiper frames his glorification to God:

When you only look at the sheet music, as if you were in a choir, then you merely engage with the outer aspects and it is a great danger that one is no longer concerned with the content of a song (Int. 1, 02.07.12).

With this strong emphasis on spoken language and thus on the spirit (mind) and with reference to the biblical injunction «to worship in spirit and truth», the interviewee explained that faithful worship takes place in and emanates from the «heart» of the believer, which is conceptualised as the location of man's «will». According to the interviewee, truthful worship is thoroughly spiritual and intellectual, which led him to the conclusion that «outer aspects [e.g. harmony, melody, rhythm] do not matter». Yet as he went on to elaborate on his feelings when singing, something, as he said, remained vague to him. In fact all interviewees asserted that there is something intimate about congregational musicking and they were reluctant to decide whether it

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<sup>11</sup>The German term *Geist* which is used here can refer to both mind and spirit.

<sup>12</sup> In this context qualified as «feelings», as it became apparent later in this interview as well as in the other interviews.

<sup>13</sup> This top-down-order of musical elements leads to a firm belief described by one 18 year old member: «Since a good Christian should not be guided by his body/flesh, he should not use rhythmic instruments. These are considered to result in very negative effects» (Int. 3, 09.06.12).

was the text or the melody that might move one both emotionally and spiritually<sup>14</sup>:

these are the same songs [every Sunday] and sometimes I am moved to tears, another time I am not. With the same song. So it cannot be the melody [that moves me] [...] but neither the words as they are the same, too (Int. 1, 02.07.12).

In their analysis of their own musical practice and what may be termed «spiritual feelings» something remained non-causal and, therefore, inexplicable.

This description of congregational worship as something fundamentally based on words but at the same time exceeding the verbal falls in line with a theological notion repeatedly articulated in the lyrics of the Closed Brethren hymns: the ineffability of certain spiritual verities. Carl Brockhaus, a precursor of Brethren churches in Germany, who composed several hymns and edited the first Brethren hymnal in German language, verbalized this understanding as follows<sup>15</sup>:

Wie unaussprechlich ist die Gnad',  
Wie reich die Segensfülle,  
Die stets erhellet unsern Pfad  
Und macht das Herz so stille! [...]  
(Hymn No. 72, Stanza 4)

How ineffable is the Grace  
How rich the abundance of blessings  
Who continue to illuminate our path  
And calms the heart.

Wer findet Worte, Dir zu danken?  
O Vater, Deine Lieb' ist groß,  
Ist unaussprechlich, ohne Schranken [...]  
(Hymn No. 89, Stanza 1)

Who would find words to thank Thee  
Oh Father how great is Thy love  
It is ineffable, and limitless.  
(My translation)

The ineffability of the spiritual sensation is hence both constructed and deconstructed. Whereas it is asked rhetorically «Who could find words to thank Thee?», nevertheless words – and only words – are supposed to articulate the deep gratitude towards God. Worship then is saying the unsayable, it is singing the unsayable with words.

<sup>14</sup> The interviewees did not talk about «rhythm» when describing the hymns sung on Sunday mornings. Terms such as rhythm or beat are almost exclusively used for other music outside the Closed Brethren Sunday service: charismatic churches, pop music, rock music or what interviewees termed «African music».

<sup>15</sup> Other examples are found in Hymns No. 75, 101, 64, 151, 204 of *Geistliche Lieder* (2012).

In many ways, this matches closely to the conventional understanding of atmospheres as something ineffable, something that is «in the air»<sup>16</sup>, present but indefinite, yet crucial to the situation as a whole. In his introduction to what he calls a *New aesthetic*, Gernot Böhme notes that

one has the impression that 'atmosphere' is meant to indicate something indeterminate, difficult to express, even if it is only in order to hide the speaker's own speechlessness. It is almost like Adorno's 'more', which also points in evocative fashion to something beyond rational explanation and with an emphasis which suggests that only there is the essential, the aesthetically relevant to be found.<sup>17</sup>

As both phenomenal domains, the atmospheric and musical, evoke a similar narrative, which becomes even amplified in religious discourse, it seems worthwhile to juxtapose the musical and the atmospheric and to develop a concept of the atmosphere in and through music.

### **The excluded middle**

It is certainly not novel, neither in theology nor in musicology, to aim at elucidating this «unsayable». Throughout the history of musicology and across its various sub-disciplines, great efforts have been made to explain the intrinsic capacity of music to affect us and to rationalise its (emotional) power. Yet, I argue, the common depiction of both atmospheres and music as something «beyond rational explanation» is not a result of their phenomenological appearance but is rather dependent upon the epistemologies underlying the argument.

As Lawrence Kramer contends, the notion of «musical speechlessness» is not an ontological given but, on the contrary, an academic custom based on the assumption that «music is *supposed* to be beyond words»<sup>18</sup>. Furthermore, the alleged vagueness, elusiveness and non-causality of both the atmospheric and the musical is attributable to the dichotomous structure of the reasoning.

Ensuing from the fragmentation of human existence into rational thought and emotional experience that has come to its peak in

<sup>16</sup> G. Böhme, *Atmosphäre* cit., p. 263.

<sup>17</sup> Id., *Atmosphäre* cit., p. 113.

<sup>18</sup> My italics. L. Kramer, *Subjectivity unbound. Music, language, culture*, in: M. Clayton - T. Herbert - R. Middleton (eds.), *The cultural study of music. A critical introduction*, New York, Routledge, 2012, pp. 395-406, here p. 396.

modern thought<sup>19</sup>, the atmosphere just as the numinous and the musical is commonly located *beyond* the explicable<sup>20</sup>, thus making it categorically resistant to intellectual apprehension. Hence, atmospheres approached in terms of form and content, materiality and signification, music and meaning, or subject and object, remain unnameable. In a similar vein, the atmospheric is not locatable in the trichotomy spirit-soul-body of the human self in the Closed Brethren theological imagination, and neither its effects can be traced back linearly to musical causes as identified by the informants: lyrics, melody, and rhythm. Rather, as one interviewee conjectures: «songs are somehow in the middle, in-between» (Int. 1, 02.07.12) mind and body, rationality and emotion.

To rescue music and atmosphere from their elusive status is to dissolve this divide, a task the *New phenomenologist* Hermann Schmitz has articulated as follows:

new phenomenology is anxious about mediating and filling the yawning gap between comprehension and affective involvement with a smooth terminology by conceptually embracing unmediated experiences of life, thus appropriating comprehension and affective involvement.<sup>21</sup>

Then, incorporating the notion of atmosphere into the study of (congregational) music does not simply lead to the denotation of another realm of ineffability nor to the genesis of a conceptual black box in academic writing, but rather entails the productive penetration of the excluded middle. In other words, to explicate the atmospheric implies dismantling «the conceptual split [of the] subject into a material body and an immaterial soul»<sup>22</sup> or inner-world and outer-world as solidified through psychologism<sup>23</sup>, questioning the ontological distinction between things and sensations<sup>24</sup>, defeating the hierarchal succession of perception and understanding, melting the division of «environmental

<sup>19</sup> H. Schmitz, *Der Leib, der Raum und die Gefühle*, Bielefeld -Basel, Aisthesis Verlag, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> G. Böhme, *Atmosphere* cit., p. 113.

<sup>21</sup> My translation: «die neue Phänomenologie [ist] darum bemüht die klaffende Spanne zwischen Begreifen und Betroffensein durch gedankliches Durchleuchten der unwillkürlichen Lebenserfahrung mit genauen und geschmeidigen Begriffen zu füllen und dadurch das Betroffensein der Besinnung anzueignen» (H. Schmitz, *Der Leib* cit., p. 12).

<sup>22</sup> H. Schmitz - R.O. Müllan - J. Slaby, *Emotions outside the box* cit., p. 224.

<sup>23</sup> H. Schmitz, *Der Leib* cit., p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

qualities and human states»<sup>25</sup> and disintegrating the dichotomy of signifier and signified as rooted in structural linguistics<sup>26</sup>. In short, a productive concept of the atmospheric requires a non-dualistic ontology in addition to a radically revised concept of the personal subject.

Stating that the «difficulty [...] of forming a legitimate concept of atmospheres lies in the classical ontology of the thing»<sup>27</sup>, Gernot Böhme seeks to embark on this task by developing his own thing ontology in dissociation from thing ontologies as proposed by Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, and Heidegger<sup>28</sup>.

By drawing on the writings of the German philosopher and Christian mystic Jakob Böhme (1575-1624)<sup>29</sup>, he conceptualises the thing not as a mere materiality but as possessive of an inner *essence*, a spirit, that is secluded and imperceptible from the outside. Despite this, according to Jakob Böhme, it lies in the very structure/nature of the thing to unveil this inner essence and thereby to transcend itself. The paragon of such a thing in Jakob Böhme's writings is the musical instrument<sup>30</sup>. It is by spiritual means, both the spirit of God and the spirit/will of man, that the hollow body of the instrument begins to sound according to its genuine temperament.

Following this, Gernot Böhme frames the musical instrument, and with it all entities, not simply as passive things but rather as active agents. He states that a thing expresses itself<sup>31</sup>, it steps out of itself, points beyond itself<sup>32</sup>, modifies the sphere of its presence and emits and radiates in ecstatic ways<sup>33</sup>. It is in these particular ecstasies, and not in their objective properties, that things appropriate their presence and afford interaction. Atmospheres are, then, the accumulations of these radiations of things of their tangible presences<sup>34</sup> as they enter our emotional states<sup>35</sup>. In short, Böhme's *New aesthetic*

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<sup>25</sup> G. Böhme, *Atmosphere* cit., p. 114.

<sup>26</sup> Id., *Atmosphäre* cit., p. 164.

<sup>27</sup> Id., *Atmosphere* cit., p. 120.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228 ff.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 163, 234, 261.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>35</sup> Id., *Atmosphäre* cit., p. 54.

is concerned with the relation between environmental qualities and human states. This in-between, by means of which environmental qualities and states are related, is atmosphere.<sup>36</sup>

However, since things and their constellations are the *source* of atmospheric radiations, Böhme's world of things needs to be animate in itself. Accordingly, Böhme's *New aesthetic* appears somewhat mystic and the very question of how things come to radiate ecstatically remains unanswered. I contend that this impression is dependent upon his maintenance of a thing ontology over which he – despite his best efforts – fails to prevail<sup>37</sup>. Crucially, the development of a concept of atmospheres not only requires scrutinising thing ontologies but revising the axiomatic dichotomy of what Böhme terms «environmental qualities» and «human states».

According to Hermann Schmitz, the description of an atmosphere as a constellation of things or bundle of factors is secondary to our involvement in situations by means of the felt (not the material) body<sup>38</sup>. «Articulation of significant situations into constellations of separate objects and structures is a later-coming achievement (although it is usually taken primary in theoretical thinking)»<sup>39</sup>; it rather belongs to the realm of verbal reconstruction, sense making, and is an existential faculty of human emancipation from the «primitive presence»<sup>40</sup>. Ensuing from one of his main theorems that «nothing is singular in itself», Schmitz claims that all singularities<sup>41</sup>, and among these all subjects and objects, are primarily rooted in situations<sup>42</sup>.

In other words, situations precede the very concept of singularity (*Einzelheit*) in the first place. Consequently – in explicit dissociation from Böhme – Schmitz postulates a *situation ontology*<sup>43</sup>. He construes situations as totalities with «internally diffuse meaningfulness [...] of states of affairs, programmes and/or problems»<sup>44</sup>, characterised by cohesion and integrity<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> Id., *Atmosphere* cit., p. 114.

<sup>37</sup> H. Schmitz, *Situationen und Konstellationen. Wider die Ideologie totaler Vernetzung*, Neue Phänomenologie Bd. 1, Freiburg, Verlag K. Alber, 2005, p. 186.

<sup>38</sup> See H. Schmitz - R.O. Müllan - J. Slaby, *Emotions outside the box* cit.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>40</sup> H. Schmitz, *Kurze Einführung in die Neue Phänomenologie*, Freiburg, Verlag K. Alber, 2012, p. 101.

<sup>41</sup> More precisely, their status of being singular.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>43</sup> See Id., *Situationen und Atmosphären* cit.; Id., *Situationen und Konstellationen* cit.

<sup>44</sup> H. Schmitz - R.O. Müllan - J. Slaby, *Emotions outside the box* cit., p. 251.

In his understanding, it is within and as situations that atmospheres take place<sup>46</sup>. Yet, whereas Böhme's constellationalism provides the analyst with a methodology to dissect and understand the atmospheric and its production, Schmitz situations remain largely analytically inscrutable. His sophisticated philosophical concepts and meticulously crafted terminology are short of methodological suggestions on how these situations may be studied and analysed empirically.

If the atmosphere is a relevant momentum in Closed Brethren congregational musicking, how can the musicologist or anthropologist account for it? If there are no given singularities in situations, no objects, no subjects, if meaningfulness is diffuse, where does the analyst commence to describe «what is going on»<sup>47</sup>? If furthermore feelings are spatially poured out atmospheres as Schmitz proposes<sup>48</sup>, how then can one even start to analyse it? Where does a situation end when the expanse of the atmosphere is rimless? And how are situations related? I argue that even though Schmitz does not provide his students with an explicit methodology, his *New phenomenology* is interspersed with potential operational terms. Hence in the following I shall propose a methodological reading of Schmitz's *New phenomenology* that aims at understanding the sonorous and the musical of atmospheres.

Thinking atmospheres in and through music and not, as Böhme does, through a musical instrument leads to a much more radical challenge to thing ontologies, since *music is not a thing*<sup>49</sup>. In order to account for such non-things as music, Hermann Schmitz establishes the notion of half-things<sup>50</sup> (*Halbdinge*) «to place alongside the concept of a thing»<sup>51</sup>. Examples of half-things

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<sup>45</sup> It is important to Schmitz's concept of situations and atmospheres that these are distinct conceptual terms, as he argues not every situation displays atmospheric qualities. See H. Schmitz, *Situationen und Atmosphären* cit., p. 177.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* Schmitz stresses that situations are often but not always laden with associated atmospheres.

<sup>47</sup> E. Goffman, *Frame analysis. An essay on the organization of experience*, New York, Harper & Row, 1974, p. 50.

<sup>48</sup> See H. Schmitz - R.O. Müllan - J. Slaby, *Emotions outside the box* cit.

<sup>49</sup> See C. Small, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Even though Müllan and Slaby translate *Halbdinge* as *half-entities* (H. Schmitz - R.O. Müllan - J. Slaby, *Emotions outside the box* cit.), I prefer to use the literal translation *half-things* since these are – and this is the important point Schmitz makes – (full) entities just as things, differing from these only in their materiality and hence temporality (see H. Schmitz, *Der Leib* cit.).

<sup>51</sup> H. Schmitz - R.O. Müllan - J. Slaby, *Emotions outside the box* cit., p. 246.

include voices, electrical forces, gravity, times of boredom, sweltering heat, stinging cold, or musical figures that contribute to the force of the musical event such as motives, themes, or melodies<sup>52</sup>. Atmospheres, similarly, are identified by Schmitz as such half-things. In contrast to things,

the duration of half-entities can be interrupted; the characteristic voice of someone resounds, falls silent and resounds again. There is no point asking how they passed the time in between.<sup>53</sup>

Starting from the concept of half-things, Schmitz emphasises movement as a key characteristic of both things and half-things alike. Yet, when it comes to the causality of movement, half-things again differ from things since «cause and mode of influence are one thing»<sup>54</sup>. In his understanding movement is an instant *effect* of half-things as they *suggest* movement, affect the felt (not the material) body, and afford unmediated resonances. On the basis of this Schmitz suggests that spatially poured out atmospheres «move the felt body»<sup>55</sup>. This translation of one of Schmitz's most prominent theorems is rather an interpretation where the German term *ergreifend*, elsewhere translated as «stirring», is rendered here as «movement»: atmospheres move the felt body. However, this choice of translation seems not without reason; motions and more general processes and momentums of all kind and on the various levels of corporeal involvement in situations are vital in Schmitz examples and definitions.

We may draw the following methodological conclusion here: if the atmosphere does *move* the felt body, then we may infer that the atmosphere's intensity, character, direction or degree of collectivity might be manifest in these very movements, manifest in other words in the present felt bodies, moreover in the discourses, practices and social systems it gives rise to. Again, it would be misleading to construe the atmospheric movement as an irresistible force. Likewise, the question of *what* it is that moves is wrongly put; as the wind, a half-thing is not a movement of air unless one does reframe it as a full-thing<sup>56</sup>,

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<sup>52</sup> See H. Schmitz, *Der Leib* cit. It is important to note that Schmitz does not call music per se a half-thing, but rather singular musical phenomena.

<sup>53</sup> H. Schmitz - R.O. Müllan - J. Slaby, *Emotions outside the box* cit., p. 256.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>56</sup> H. Schmitz, *Kurze Einführung* cit., p. 74.

rather it *is* its motion, or, to use Schmitz terminology, its *movement suggestion*.

Music proves more complicated when it comes to the question of movement, and musicologists have disagreed on this subject ever since. Schmitz stresses that music does not move, only when its source shifts in distance and direction<sup>57</sup>. Instead, he argues that the half-thing music *suggests* motion (again, note that cause and mode of influence concur). It would exceed the scope of this paper to delve into the debate about musical movement here; rather, what I would like to retain is that «movement» is intrinsic to musical phenomena, in one way or another.

### **A methodological movement ontology**

Following this, I propose a *methodological ontology* of atmospheres as movement, a *movement ontology*; «movement» here is meant as a generic term involving shifts, transformations, dynamics, processes, repetitions, movement-suggestions, or becomings<sup>58</sup>. This ontology is methodological because it would be reductive to construe *being* per se as movement, and moreover it would contradict everyday experience where in fact many atmospheres seem to suggest rest, appear as non-moving or simply are noticed as places and locales one enters or passes by. Yet I argue that, in order to analyse the atmosphere as situation and not as constellation, a close observation of the various (levels of) movements and momentums might disclose the cohesive situation of the atmosphere without essentialising its components.

Consequently to such a movement ontology and in line with Schmitz's concept of the person, the subject is not a given, outside the atmospheric current and neither its receiver-/perceiver nor source. On the contrary, what is called «the subject» or «subjectivity» is secondary to the situations of the atmosphere, it is secondary to its movement.

Personhood and objecthood are emergent phenomena; and it is this very process of their emergence, more precisely their becoming, a musicology and anthropology of atmospheres would be interested in. The situating of subject and object downstream in

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<sup>57</sup> See Id., *Situationen und Konstellationen* cit., p. 197; Id., *Der Leib* cit., p. 34.

<sup>58</sup> It is beyond the scope of the paper to give a definition for each of these terms that all refer to distinct phenomena. However, none of these terms ought to be understood in its physicalistic meaning, especially not in Cartesian coordinates.

respect to music is accounted for by Goodman's writings. With a focus on the sonic as vibration and its incorporeal and corporeal affects, Goodman emphasises that the «distinction between subject and object [is] a second order effect»<sup>59</sup>. In contrast to the reiterated notion that the atmosphere is non-existent without a perceiving subject<sup>60</sup>, it is possible to construe atmospheres instead as non-subjective and as non-anthropocentric<sup>61</sup>.

Again, with this emphasis on movement, the musical, the atmospheric, and the numinous seem to exhibit similar traits. Defining atmosphere as «the unbounded occupation of a surfaceless space in the region of what is experienced as present»<sup>62</sup>, Schmitz takes the situation of the early Christians as described in the *Acts* as exemplary for the idea that «emotions as atmospheres are spatial in a surfaceless space»<sup>63</sup>. He writes that «for the early Christians the Holy Spirit was such an atmosphere in which they lived, of love, joy and freedom»<sup>64</sup>.

This nexus of the atmosphere and the Holy Spirit is not arbitrary. In the *Gospel of John* and in the *Acts of the Apostles* the Holy Spirit is depicted as weather, in Schmitz's terminology a half-thing and a paragon of the atmosphere: «The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit»<sup>65</sup>. Here, the numinous is an unintelligible motion yet immanently sonic whose causative condition is opaque. Movement hence is common not just to music and atmosphere but as well to the poured out numinosity «that fills the entire house»<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> S. Goodman, *Sonic warfare. Sound, affect, and the ecology of fear*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2010, p. 92.

<sup>60</sup> G. Böhme, *Atmosphäre* cit., p. 263.

<sup>61</sup> This involves to overcome a «phenomenological anthropocentrism» as found in «almost all music and sonic analyses, obsessed with individualized subjective feeling, [which] denigrates the vibrational nexus at the altar of human audition, thereby neglecting the agency distributed around a vibrational encounter and ignoring the nonhuman participants of the nexus of experience» (S. Goodman, *op. cit.*, p. 82).

<sup>62</sup> H. Schmitz, *Kurze Einführung* cit., p. 78.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>65</sup> The same Greek word means both wind and spirit. *The Bible*, English Standard Version, John 3,8. See also Acts 2,1-4: «When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance».

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, Acts 2,2.

One further concern needs to be addressed here, that is, the ontological state not of half-things, but of things; in this case study the architecture of the assembly hall, the seating, the pulpit, the Eucharist, the clothing, the hymnals, the surfaces of walls and floors. If atmosphere is conceptualised as movements, are material things subjected to these atmospheric currents, just as a vessel is exposed to the oscillations of a wave? Does the atmosphere «flow around» such material things and «tinge» them, as Böhme proposes? Or is the atmosphere a medium that mediates the world of things and alters their presences? In other words, is the conception of music, atmosphere and half-things as movements something that is set in contrast to the non-moving material world?

In his study of materials which constitute material objects, Tim Ingold, following Deleuze and Guattari, develops an ontology of things based on what he calls the «primacy of movement»<sup>67</sup>. In his account things are embedded into the *currents of materials*, «they are part of generative fluxes of the world of materials in which they came into being and continue to subsist»<sup>68</sup>. Even the most inert elements such as stones, as he points out, are in constant transformation and flux<sup>69</sup>. In contrast to Böhme, Ingold does not *add* movement to materials, which is to put «life into things», rather in his understanding «things are in life»<sup>70</sup>.

Thus, it is possible for Ingold to overcome the artificial segregation of cause and effect or agent and action when it comes to the «all-enveloping experience of [...] atmospheres». He declares that «the breaking waves [*are*] their sound, not an object that makes sound»<sup>71</sup>. In a similar manner, Gaston Bachelard conceives of matter in terms of rhythmic vibration and thereby infers an ontology of movement. According to Bachelard,

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<sup>67</sup> T. Ingold, *Being alive. Essays on movement, knowledge and description*, London-New York, Routledge, 2011, p. xii.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>69</sup> Whereas Schmitz tacitly assumes a *categorical* difference between things and half-things, it is possible with Ingold to postulate *gradual* differences between the occurrences of the various entities. It is within their own speeds that bodies *take place*. Whereas a stone moves and alters inconspicuously slowly, music can move elusively fast and an atmosphere can appear not to move at all, like the night of an insomnia patient.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 178-179. Reading Gernot Böhme against the intellectual backdrop provided by Tim Ingold, his ontology of things can be described as neo-animistic, not in the sense of allegedly animistic cultures, but in a continuation of anthropology's conventionalised orientalist representation of these cultures.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

if a particle ceased to vibrate it would cease to *be*. [...] It should not be said that substance develops and reveals itself in the form of rhythm, but rather that it is regular rhythm which appears in the form of a specific material attribute.<sup>72</sup>

This primacy of movement not only illuminates the relation between the atmosphere and the things, but equally helps to address the highly problematic a-historicity of Böhme's felt body. In Böhme's account, sensorial and bodily perceptions of objects are immediate to such a degree that they appear unhistorical, as if the human body could perceive the *things in themselves*, which, as he elaborates in his chapter on the thing and its ecstasies, appear to enable just that, in showing themselves as they are. To conceptualise the subject and things not as the source of movement but as embedded in movement also allows us to situate them – and, with them, the felt body – in the currents of history<sup>73</sup>.

Let me summarise: thinking about atmosphere through music enables us to establish a methodological ontology of atmosphere *as* movements. Yet, if atmosphere and music are both conceived of as movements, then, it needs to be asked how they are conceptually related. The atmosphere is not solely what we hear and neither can it be penetrated analytically via the aural; as Abels emphasises, atmosphere is multi-sensory<sup>74</sup>. On the other, hand musical performances always encompass atmospheric qualities. They are embedded in atmosphere, they produce and alter atmosphere and are themselves permeated and shifted by it. Hence, the study of music is always the study of the atmosphere alongside which it occurs and from which it cannot be

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<sup>72</sup> My italics. G. Bachelard, *The dialectic of duration*, Manchester, Clinamen, 2000, p. 138. See as well the chapter on rhythm analysis in S. Goodman, *op. cit.* where he discusses Bachelard's theory of rhythm and its philosophical implications.

<sup>73</sup> This, in turn, falls in line with Schmitz's postulated notion of the «abstraction base», «a set of fundamental ideas or concepts [...] that [...] provide a deep framework of intelligibility in which all things appear in experience» (H. Schmitz, *Der Leib* cit., p. 11; H. Schmitz - R.O. Müllan - J. Slaby, *Emotions outside the box* cit., p. 244). See also C. Friberg, *Hermeneutics of ambiance*, in J.-P. Thibaud - D. Siret (eds.), *Ambiances in action. Proceedings of the 2nd international congress on ambiances*, Montreal, Réseau International Ambiances, 2012, pp. 671-676.

<sup>74</sup> B. Abels, *Hörgemeinschaften. Eine musikwissenschaftliche Annäherung an die Atmosphärenforschung*, «Musikforschung» 3 (2013), pp. 220-231.

separated. It is in this respect that I propose to speak of music not as performance<sup>75</sup> but *as* atmosphere.

But let me come back to the unsayable. The musical ontology manifest in Closed Brethren discourse is arborescent, as it is evident in its linguistic description. The tripartite division of lyrics, melody, and rhythm correlates with the segregation of the self into spirit (mind), soul, and body and suggests that these elements are non-processual, existing within a rigid lexical stratification that allows little movement across categorical borders. The atmosphere is unsayable here because movement is not denotable. Following Hermann Schmitz, I propose that the analysis of the atmospheric requires a language of verbs (including nominalised verbs) rather than nouns – a language that aims at processes and interim states rather than categories of things in themselves<sup>76</sup>. This means to describe the elements out of which atmospheres emerge not as an assemblage of *things* but of (musical) currents and motions. Movements, differently from the common understanding of things, have no surface, they cannot be differentiated and delineated concisely. Sound, the paragon of my proposed movement ontology, is exemplary here since – as Schmitz’s atmosphere – sonic motion occupies an unbounded space, fringed at its margins; one cannot say where a sonic motion ends, since it is transduced across substances and extends into immeasurable spaces. Then, to trace movements as they cohere within the atmosphere is to acknowledge the motion that powerfully and fragmentarily links the former things and subjects through particular vibrations across the various sensory strata. It equally implies a turn away from the subject, the «interiorised human centre of being and feeling»<sup>77</sup>, as the ultimate perceiver of music and atmosphere and a turn, instead, towards the multifarious atmospheric and musical movements that constitute subjectivities.

Having developed an ontology of both atmosphere and music as motion, in the following I shall focus on two movements in the Closed Brethren Worship services. Since verbs are pivotal in the writings of Deleuze and Guattari, their concepts appear e-

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<sup>75</sup> See N. Cook, *Beyond the score. Music as performance*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014.

<sup>76</sup> See G. Dirmoser, *Verben-Sammlung. Die Welt der Atmosphären, Verben im Kontext*, [http://gerhard\\_dirmoser.public1.linz.at/atmo/atmo2.pdf](http://gerhard_dirmoser.public1.linz.at/atmo/atmo2.pdf); H. Schmitz, *Situationen und Atmosphären* cit., p. 185.

<sup>77</sup> S. Goodman, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

minently suitable here. Thus, I shall employ two of their conceptual nominalised verbs<sup>78</sup>: *becoming*, a movement on the level of the individual worshiper linked to the *smoothing force* of the atmosphere, and *territorialisation*, a movement of the atmosphere towards its solidification linked to a process of *striation*.

### **Becomings: intimate alienations**

Sound possesses the physical and phenomenological capacity to albeit gradually demarcate and alter the expanse of an atmosphere both spatially and temporally. Schmitz elucidates how music occupies an intensive space rather than a quantifiable extensive one. Music's intensity is twofold, he argues: the intensive extent of the sound space, beset with atmospheres<sup>79</sup>, and the intensive duration of the sound continuously becoming historically charged<sup>80</sup>. The beginning and spatial extent of the worship service in Closed Brethren churches is demarcated with silence; silence that initiates an intensive space, an intensive duration. Silence concerns the acoustic dissociation of the congregational situation from mundane life and is manifest in the bodily movements of its participants. As congregants transgress the threshold and enter the assembly hall, their voices fall silent and their movements become restrained while they walk straight up to a vacant seat. Only silence resounds, several minutes long, the service has already begun.

The hush slows down motion and lengthens the present. Worshipers say that they «come into the presence of their Lord», something that is also phrased musically in many of their hymns<sup>81</sup>. Insiders and uninformed newcomers alike immediately adapt to this tranquillity as they mutually *encorporate* the calm. The communal vocalisation of hymns in the course of the service arises from this shared silence and constitutes an atmospheric shift.

Both silence and the sound of the singing voices affect all bodies present in the specific locale and bring them into reverberation. Whereas individuals may refrain from singing or speaking, watching or moving, they have no similar ability to

<sup>78</sup> G. Deleuze - F. Guattari, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

<sup>79</sup> Note that Schmitz uses the plural here.

<sup>80</sup> H. Schmitz, *Atmosphären* cit., p. 88.

<sup>81</sup> *Kleine Sammlung Geistlicher Lieder*, Hymn No. 22, 157, 136, 157, 171, 213, 231, 237, 204.

withdraw from the audible, there is no closing of the ear. Rather, the sonic penetrates their felt bodies<sup>82</sup>, and even dissolves the distinction between a bodily inside and outside as the singing voices of attendees transgress their corporeal presences. In a process of «mutual incorporation» (*solidarische Einleibung*) whereby felt bodies assimilate motion, the movement of the hymn pervades the entire congregation. Thus music, sounds and silences bring all those who are present into a single encompassing situation through vibration<sup>83</sup>. It is in respect of this mutual incorporation by means of movement suggestions (*Bewegungssuggestionen*) that Schmitz writes

communal singing elicits a mood-dome forming an arch above the participants who, according to their own impulses, are taken up by the atmosphere.<sup>84</sup>

Human and non-human entities become «ensounded»<sup>85</sup> as all movements and force fields attune to the sonic motion that is the atmosphere. Crucially the term *Bewegungssuggestion* as proposed by Schmitz does not just refer to actual movements but more importantly to potential ones; and it is this intrinsic contingency of motion, rather than its effective occurrence in space, where the music as atmosphere becomes evocative of spiritual becomings. Yet, just as sound and feeling, the movement is not located *within* the individual but is poured out spatially and is potentially mutually incorporated. The evoked tension of suggested hence potential movement is occasionally pandered to when the otherwise seated congregation collectively raises to sing a hymn. Either the person (a male worshiper) who in the course of the service proposes «let us sing the hymn number 122» adds «let us rise while singing», or someone (a male worshiper) interrupts the singing congregation after the end of a verse to suggest to sing the remaining verses standing. The congregation collectively follows these invitations, incorporating the musical movement suggestions that is the atmospheric movement.

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<sup>82</sup> Compare Schmitz's notion of the «auditive felt body [*der hörende Leib*]» in H. Schmitz, *Kurze Einführung* cit., p. 74.

<sup>83</sup> See Id., *Situationen und Konstellationen* cit.

<sup>84</sup> «Gemeinsames Singen wölbt gleichsam eine Stimmungsglocke über die Teilnehmer, die mit ihren eigenen Impulsen in der Atmosphäre aufgehen» (Id., *Der Leib* cit., p. 34).

<sup>85</sup> T. Ingold, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

Two hymns that are occasionally sung this way are *Die Ruh auf immerdar* and *Dem, der uns liebt*. Both hymns exhibit a musical passage of harmonic modulation with similar chromatic shifts in the four voices and an emphasis on leading-tones that effect the ascending melodic movement in the first voice. In the hymn *Dem, der uns liebt* this musically pre-eminent passage coheres with the central declaration of the hymn: «to him be the glory and power». The same passage in *Die Ruh auf immerdar* is phrased in the French original as sung by Closed Brethren worshippers in French speaking congregations: «Élève en haut les yeux; il est ta delivrance»; and the reference to the movement of lifting up one's eyes to the bare heights is incorporated musically and acoustically.

This mutual attunement has powerful social consequences since everybody present at a Sunday morning service is corporeally (*eigenleiblich*) part of the musical movement irrespective of any personal dispositions towards the social setting or individual attitudes concerning beliefs articulated in the lyrics. Yet, there are multiple ways to listen while hearing. To suggest that everyone becomes attuned to the same mood, would lead to the dissipation of the subject<sup>86</sup>. Instead, I argue that individuals' sentiments and emotional currents shift alongside and in relation to larger-scale atmospheric movements.

In the context of the postulated (methodological) movement ontology agency needs to be relocated. Just as the silence cannot be ascribed to a particular instigator since everybody partakes in it, perceives it, and produces it at the same time, the movement of the atmosphere is equally not attributable to a particular agent. Furthermore, the movement of the atmosphere cannot be attributed to the community as a social entity. It is in this respect that Deleuze and Guattari argue about the «molecular realm of beliefs and desires» that «the distinction between the social and the individual loses all meaning since flows are neither attributable to individuals nor overcodable by collective signifiers»<sup>87</sup>.

This vacancy of an agent in relation to the atmospheric motion yields to theological imaginations and to the acknowledging of divine potency such as the efficacy of the «Holy Spirit» who is believed to direct the worship service. Here, along with

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<sup>86</sup> See H. Schmitz, *Situationen und Konstellationen* cit., p. 275.

<sup>87</sup> G. Deleuze - F. Guattari, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

the formation of subjectivities as a second order effect, the identification of agents and the acknowledgment of agency are secondary to the atmospheric movement. Thus, the atmospheric does not impose itself on the individual, but, rather, affords particular movements (*Bewegungssuggestionen*).

Hence, the atmosphere is not primarily experienced in terms of agency on behalf of the individual, nor in terms of her ability to *decide* to immerse herself in the atmosphere, as Abels suggests<sup>88</sup>, but can in this case more appropriately be described as an experiential motion of a shared situation and thus as affective communitisation. Schmitz writes that «the foundation of personhood is not to be sought in the soul, but is embodied»<sup>89</sup>. This embodiment is not fixed, nor is a linear process, much rather it is *dynamic* with «receptivity to the dawning of the new». Whereas the notion of agency and the proposition of the subject's immersion into a particular atmosphere would require the a priori *being* of an agent, the affective corporeal involvement (by means of the felt body) in atmospheres is – in line with the postulated movement ontology – more appropriately termed *becoming*.

This notion of becoming as developed in *Thousand plateaus* by Deleuze and Guattari refers to indecomposable states of being, irreducible to subjective or objective components, in fact an itinerant movement and crossing of thresholds<sup>90</sup>. Deleuze and Guattari depict becomings as «block[s] of coexistence»<sup>91</sup> which are emergent<sup>92</sup> and, like atmospheres, cannot be grasped through a structuralist language of causation<sup>93</sup>. To put it in another way, «in becoming [...] one can achieve an ultimate existential stage in which life is simply immanent and open to new relations [...] and trajectories»<sup>94</sup>.

This becoming is not fortuitous but of central importance to the congregational atmosphere – and, perhaps, ultimately to most atmospheres – since the individual joins the worship

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<sup>88</sup> See B. Abels, *op. cit.*

<sup>89</sup> H. Schmitz, *Kurze Einführung* cit., p. 45.

<sup>90</sup> See G. Deleuze - F. Guattari, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>93</sup> «Structuralism clearly does not account for [...] becomings, since it is designed precisely to deny or at least denigrate their existence: a correspondence of relations does not add up to becomings» (*ibid.*, p. 261).

<sup>94</sup> J. Biehl - P. Locke, *Deleuze and the anthropology of becoming*, «Current anthropology» 51/3 (2010), pp. 317-351, here p. 317.

service in search of spiritual renewal, in order to abandon the mundane and moral earthliness and to reach the «throne of God» in an «unnatural participation»<sup>95</sup>. It is dynamics, contingent upon the atmospheric progression of the service, and manifest as continuous transformation in the bodies that are present. This is intimate alienation. This is where attendees perpetually *become* «children of God», and «brothers» of their «Lord Jesus Christ». This line of becoming is theologically imagined to be infinite since in the course of a single lifetime an individual never succeeds in finally morally becoming a Saint<sup>96</sup>. Instead, it is a motion, embedded in the atmospheric currents of congregational musicking, towards a desired state of glorification that the worshiper embraces – not imitation, nor imagination or mere identification<sup>97</sup>, but a truthful and continuous conversion.

In order to understand the embodied dynamism, the movements of becoming, and the movement suggestions of the music in relation to the atmosphere as a spatial phenomenon, the notion of «surfaceless space [*flächenloser Raum*]» as introduced by Hermann Schmitz is helpful. The surfaceless space is a pre-dimensional non-Cartesian space that is situated upstream of the three-dimensional space<sup>98</sup>. It is by means of this surfaceless space that three-dimensional space is experienced. Sound is a prime example of this surfaceless space as it cannot be measured in terms of lengths and points, positions and distances, which are prerequisites in order to determine a surface. Consequently, the extent of the sonic space cannot be delineated and is, in Schmitz's terminology, «unbounded [*randlos*]».

The particularities of Closed Brethren congregational musicking reveal an utilisation of this spatial idiosyncrasy of music as atmosphere. The activity of musicking is equally distributed throughout the entire congregation as members attune vocally to each other in four-part-harmony. There is no stage performance, no choir, no allocated worship leader, no instrumentalist, and there is no audience to simply listen, or who might just sing

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<sup>95</sup> G. Deleuze - F. Guattari, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

<sup>96</sup> As far as Closed Brethren theological imagination is concerned, the born again Christian is at the moment of his/her rebirth a child of God and a brother/sister of Christ and hence ultimately a Saint. This is his/her spiritual estate. The «becoming» in worship services and throughout the life of the believer is therefore the enactment and experience of what one considers himself/herself to be.

<sup>97</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 262, 336.

<sup>98</sup> See H. Schmitz - R.O. Müllan - J. Slaby, *Emotions outside the box cit.*, pp. 242-243.

along. Each individual is thereby positioned *within* the acoustic source from whence the hymn emanates into a beyond, engendering a surfaceless, unbounded spatiality. The sound of the singing voices reaches beyond the assembled bodies of the congregation and potentially transgresses doors, windows, walls, exceeds worldliness, corporeality, and carnality. While musicking, the congregation cannot grasp the extent of their voices.

From the auditory perspective of the singing bodies the range of their song is immeasurable and *unforehearable*. As a result, sound becomes a key instrument of theological and ecclesiological imagination, as individual worshipers and the ensounded congregation reach (out to) God in song. It is in the surfaceless space of congregational musicking which is neither limited to nor dependent upon the three-dimensional space that God equally «reverberates» and therefore becomes (is) part of the atmospheric movement. Within this surfaceless space worshipers «advance the throne of grace»<sup>99</sup>, «sit to the feed of their Lord»<sup>100</sup> or «approach his countenance»<sup>101</sup> as they sing. Via sound the congregational atmosphere establishes its own spatiality, which is pre-dimensional and thus a potential means of constituting incorporeal and corporeal relations alike; a situation of immanence, an atmosphere.

Here it becomes clear that situations are wholes (*Ganzheiten*) with thematic and atmospheric cohesion inside and contrasting thresholds at their margins<sup>102</sup>. Schmitz suggests that situations have a chaotic multifarious «field (halo) of significance [*Hof der Bedeutsamkeit*]» in which the individual parts and bodies are not solitary. This is due to the fact that within the situation it is uncertain whereof they are different and wherewith they are equivalent<sup>103</sup>. As mentioned earlier, singularities (*Einzelheiten*) cannot be singled out since it is ambiguous

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<sup>99</sup> No. 222.

<sup>100</sup> No. 172.

<sup>101</sup> No. 157.

<sup>102</sup> H. Schmitz, *Situationen und Konstellationen* cit., p. 46. This is conspicuous to such a degree that it is not made explicit in Gernot Böhme's writings. Albeit, to conceive of atmospheres as wholes is vital to the analysis of the various speeds, movements and lines of becoming that take place in atmospheres.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

where one thing ends and another begins<sup>104</sup>. This corresponds to Anderson's conclusion that

if atmospheres proceed from and are created by bodies, they are not, however, reducible to them. [...] The singular affective qualities that are atmospheres [...] exceed that from which they emanate.<sup>105</sup>

In other words, even though one might identify certain elements in Closed Brethren congregational musicking with certain affects, such as the slow meter of the hymns with a solemn quality or the four part singing with a certain sense of unity and mutual dependency, these would not *add up* to the atmosphere. In fact, to identify the meter as solemn and the multipart singing as unifying is only possible in their situatedness – that is within the atmosphere as a whole. Moreover, it is not the music only that initiates a certain atmosphere nor the readings, prayers and sermons, the particular dress code<sup>106</sup> or the visual aspects of the sparsely furnished assembly hall. It is rather the atmosphere as a cohesive yet shifting whole that reveals the music, the style of dress, or the assembly hall as meaningful and particular.

This aspect of atmospheres as something consistent, a situation where the allegedly singular elements are not fixed entities organised along a principal of metered relations, but rather are seamlessly accumulated into one encompassing whole, is similar to the notion of the «smooth space» in the writings of Deleuze and Guattari<sup>107</sup>. Borrowing the concept from French composer Pierre Boulez<sup>108</sup>, «smooth space is directional rather than dimensional or metric [...] filled by events or haec-

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<sup>104</sup> It is a paramount task of Schmitz's philosophy to antagonise the overestimation of singularities and their constellations over the chaotic multifariousness of the situation. See *ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>105</sup> B. Anderson, *Affective atmospheres*, «Emotion, Space and Society» 2/2 (2009), pp. 77-81, here p. 80.

<sup>106</sup> Women consistently wear modest skirts and are strongly encouraged to put on headscarves during the service. Men usually wear suits or similar decent garments and children are clothed with their Sunday bests.

<sup>107</sup> See G. Deleuze - F. Guattari, *op. cit.* Kerstin Andermann has remarked on the striking proximity of Hermann Schmitz with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. See K. Andermann, *Die Rolle ontologischer Leitbilder für die Bestimmung von Gefühlen als Atmosphären*, in K. Andermann - U. Eberlein (hrsgg.), *Gefühle als Atmosphären. Neue Phänomenologie und philosophische Emotionstheorie*, Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie Sonderband 29, Berlin, Akad.-Verl., 2011, pp. 79-96, here p. 85.

<sup>108</sup> «In the simplest terms, Boulez says that in a smooth space-time one occupies without counting, whereas in a striated space-time one counts in order to occupy» (G. Deleuze - F. Guattari, *op. cit.*, p. 527).

ceities, far more than by formed and perceived things». And, similar to Schmitz's concept of the surfaceless space, the smooth space «is an intensive rather than extensive space»<sup>109</sup>. Within a smooth space the various events and affects occur as free movements, disorganised and sensual, intensive becomings. Just as the smooth space, the atmosphere is not a constellation of things, it is not so much related to sight but to haptic perception including the auditory in that it is «occupied by intensities, wind and noise, forces, and sonorous and tactile qualities»<sup>110</sup>.

The concept of smooth space, albeit similar to the surfaceless space, adds something to the study of atmosphere here, since it is wedded to what Pierre Boulez has termed «striated space», a metered space initiated by stratification, hierarchisation, and centralisation, productive of dichotomies and static identities. In contrast to a notion of atmosphere as something affective, indeterminate, or vague, the concepts of the «smooth» and the «striated» may account for the close linkage of the atmospheric with power relations. Whereas atmospheres are smooth spaces of becomings, they nevertheless can transverse into striating forces. In fact, as I will maintain in the following, it is *because* of the smooth space of the atmosphere that stratification takes place over time and repetition. This aspect, which is often overlooked in research on atmospheres, is an important part of atmospheric formations, as the case study of the Closed Brethren worship service shows<sup>111</sup>.

### **Territorialisations: home making**

Schmitz insists provocatively that atmospheres can be autonomous from «the things»<sup>112</sup>, yet, I argue, they are not completely independent from individual movements and smaller scale momentums. The atmosphere in fact seems *dependent* on the specific inextricable *aggregation* of its parts. This dependence however is not of linear causality – one cannot purposefully and successfully erect nor direct an atmosphere – but rather relates to the immanent diffuse meaningfulness of the atmosphere; a dependence, only apparent *within* and in relation *to* a particular atmosphere in a particular situation. As a result, if an atmo-

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 528.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Also compare T. Ingold, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-134.

<sup>112</sup> See H. Schmitz, *Situationen und Atmosphären* cit.; G. Böhme, *Atmosphäre* cit., p. 30.

sphere both constitutes parts *and* is dependent on a particular allocation of these, a minor shift or addition of just *one* element, in fact movement, can throw an entire atmosphere out of kilter<sup>113</sup>. In this respect, atmospheres are both fragile and contingent. This non-linear and situation sensitive dependence of the atmospheric has far reaching consequences when it comes to repetition and therewith to questions of repertoire or musical style.

All hymns sung on Sunday mornings in Closed Brethren congregations have a steady meter and a clear phrasing with strong downbeats in all four voices. They are largely homophonic, have a strophic structure mostly without a refrain. The flow of the lyrics is thoroughly metrical, reinforcing the rigid phrasing through clear rhymes. Musical and lyrical meter are inextricably linked and breath marks in all voices assist the assembly in maintaining rhythmical consistency. Within Closed Brethren music making off-beat rhythms, as found in the hymns of other free churches or popular music, are unable to integrate with the congregational atmosphere. To include a hymn with an off-beat structure into the Sunday morning service would not just alter the musical texture or expand the musical repertoire, but would potentially collapse the entire atmosphere<sup>114</sup>.

To put it in another way, the constitution of the atmosphere could be hindered by the addition of certain musical movement suggestions<sup>115</sup> that are not determined by the whole as pertaining to the congregational atmosphere in Closed Brethren services. Thus, whilst the rejection of what was labelled in interviews as «syncopated music» is made on a moral basis, since the off-beat, taken to be addressing the (physical) body, is imagined to be carnal, it is at its core an attempt to hold on to the smooth space, the congregational atmosphere. This musical dispute, then, is not merely about the *significations* of certain musical elements or their classification as essentially good or bad, but about

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<sup>113</sup> Not every alteration will have a devastating effect and the efficacy of the various movements is not a property of the thing. That is to say, loud movements will not always have a powerful effect and soft movements will not always induce only a weak shift. Instead, the efficacy of the various movements is determined by the whole.

<sup>114</sup> The shift on the level of the atmosphere is strictly speaking not a collapse but an alteration of the atmosphere towards another atmosphere. Yet, since the atmosphere which results of the major rupture is not desired and even rejected, this rupture is in fact experienced as a collapse and not a smooth shift from one atmosphere into another.

<sup>115</sup> This is of course just as true for alterations on other levels: light, clothing, social relationships, furniture, sermons, dialects, or faces.

their affective intensities within the congregational atmosphere. In this understanding the off-beat is not a «thing in itself» with an intrinsic moral meaning, but a rhythm alien to the whole atmosphere, and therefore powerful enough to distort the atmospheric movement suggestions of congregational worship.

The smooth space of congregational musicking would be ruptured by transverse motion to such an extent that it would no longer be open to spiritual *becomings*. Worshipers would be deflected from God by hearing (listening to) the music, in fact the musical rupture, instead of remaining in a state of hearing *in* music, that is, being in a relationship to God and fellow worshipers musically<sup>116</sup>. Thus, in order to experience intimate becomings and the constitution of a smooth space, worshipers strive for coherence, since it is only there that true<sup>117</sup> becomings can occur<sup>118</sup>. Due to this coherence, manifest in the atmosphere, minor musical mutations are rejected rigorously; hence, striating forces evolve.

Atmospheres are never simply «there» as Schmitz's notion of the situation may suggest. They not only beset certain situations, but are equally embedded in the currents of history and, furthermore, are productive in forming pasts and futures. This aspect is crucial to congregational atmospheres since they are repeated in a steady weekly rhythm. As the particular atmosphere seems dependent on specific aggregations of forces and motions, the repetition of the congregational atmosphere is in fact its solidification, because to aim for an iteration of the atmosphere is to neatly reassemble the bodies that one had identified as having been part of the previous atmosphere and to bring them into reverberation in the same, or at least in a similar manner. As a result, a congregational practice establishes that is reliant upon structures and hierarchies in order to stabilise the constitution of the desired atmosphere. In fact, the repetition of the «smooth space» of the atmosphere powerfully provokes, in a process of what Deleuze and Guattari term «territorialisation», a «striated space» of systems, hierarchies and numerical order<sup>119</sup>.

This effect is inscribed in the canonical musical repertoire of the Closed Brethren. In the most recent expansion of the

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<sup>116</sup> See T. Ingold, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

<sup>117</sup> Becomings that are not imitations or mere imaginations.

<sup>118</sup> See G. Deleuze - F. Guattari, *op. cit.*, p. 537.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

hymnal *Kleine Sammlung Geistlicher Lieder* in 2013, 75 new hymns were added, of which several were newly composed (both text and music) by Closed Brethren church members themselves. These were assembled by a centralised self-ordained committee of male Brethren and disseminated among the German assemblies via the publisher CSV (*Christliche Schriftenverbreitung Hückeswagen*), informally recognised as *Closed Brethren publisher*. However, these 'novel' hymns are not entirely new, since they draw on the musical style of the older hymns within the hymnal. Just like the older hymns, the newer compositions are strophic, they have a four-part musical texture, are sung slowly and solemnly, and are without instrumentation.

As a result, the various situational atmospheres of different worship services merge into one encompassing ideal atmosphere as they territorialise across generations. Deleuze and Guattari argue that it is in «temporal constancy», here the weekly cycle of the service, and in «spatial range», here the assembly hall, that territorialisation takes place and «refrains», here hymns and silences, become a territorial mark<sup>120</sup>. In this territorial atmosphere, with its musical continuity and atmospheric consistency, church members find a home to return to. A home where «the forces of chaos are kept outside as much as possible» by means of an «activity of selection, elimination and extraction»<sup>121</sup>. As a result of its repetition, the congregational atmosphere entails some tension between the smooth or surfaceless space where becomings occur and the striated structured space where identities are ready-made in theological discourse.

It is here, in the highly territorial atmosphere, that denomination comes into play. Böhme suggests that the specificity of atmospheres is experienced most intensely when their characters are in most striking contrast. He postulates that due to its divergence a particular atmosphere is stirring with the tendency to put one into a distinct mood<sup>122</sup>. In the process of atmospheric territorialisation and striation in weekly repetition, Closed Brethren worship services establish boundaries and erect thresholds to the everyday.

Whereas musicking with musical instruments is a pervasive and even highly valued activity in the mundane lives of church

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 347.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343.

<sup>122</sup> G. Böhme, *Atmosphäre* cit., pp. 263-264.

members, it is excluded from worship services. As a result of this contrast, the atmosphere of services becomes a powerful tool in suggesting a particular movement and affording very particular mood due to its distinctiveness from the everyday life. Moreover, in its coherence the Closed Brethren worship service is set in contrast to other religious atmospheres, thereby highlighting not only difference, but producing unity: the particular atmosphere, by virtue of its territorialisation over generations and across geographic boundaries, develops thresholds with its evangelical and religious Others. Hence, the atmosphere becomes an expressive territorial mark of 'Closed Brethrenness'<sup>123</sup>. It is with the atmosphere that the proper name of a denomination transforms into an adjective of congregational practice. Now we can speak not only of the atmosphere in Closed Brethren services, but indeed of a particular *Closed Brethren* (worship) atmosphere.

Not least because of its crucial impact in situations of worship, the atmosphere is discursively made sense of in respect to biblical doctrine. This may relate to a movement<sup>124</sup> Schmitz calls self-ascription, where a «sphere of the own» evolves that is set in contrast to the foreign<sup>125</sup>. Here this self-ascription of an individual person<sup>126</sup> is transcended as a self-ascription of the group that, because of the collective atmosphere, tends to be almost identical with the individual. While talking about music with members of the Closed Brethren community, musical practice was often linked with dispensationalist ideas, theological systems of distinct aeons. In particular, contemporary musicking was strongly dissociated from the Jewish Old Testament worship. This delineation, however, was not merely theological, but also appeared to be experienced in the affective qualities of musicking. One interviewee imagined Old Testament worship as follows:

There were musical instruments, there was a shouting that resounded in the far distance, because it was external. It was truthful since it corresponded to the Word of God but it was not a spiritual worship (Int. 1, 02.07.12).

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<sup>123</sup> G. Deleuze - F. Guattari, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

<sup>124</sup> Schmitz talks here about transgressing a threshold.

<sup>125</sup> H. Schmitz, *Kurze Einführung* cit., p. 45.

<sup>126</sup> Self-ascription is in fact the *means* by which a person reaches proper personhood and individuality.

In contrast, today Closed Brethren services are described by their participants as being somewhat subdued in sentiment, since they are performed in remembrance of the death of Christ, hence within the «dispensation of grace»<sup>127</sup>. In a similar way, Closed Brethren music is dissociated from what was labelled «modern Praise and Worship» (Int. 2, Int. 3), which stands in contrast to the intimate and muted mediation and worship in Closed Brethren congregations. Thus, it is not just in ecclesiological discourse and theological doctrine that denomination and spiritual belonging are negotiated, but it is also – and perhaps primarily – *experienced* in the congregational atmosphere as a territorial home.

It is in the striated space of the territory where certain elements take on meaning and function, where things are differentiated and become expressive, where men are different from women<sup>128</sup> and where the four-part-singing signifies the church of the New Testament and the time of grace, where systems of habits emerge and moral judgements solidify<sup>129</sup>. One can analyse the striated space, one can delineate subjects and objects, as well as agencies and hierarchies. However, these are not to be confused with the smooth space of the atmosphere, they are not the atmosphere but eventually the result of its repetition, feeding into new atmospheres in a constant movement, a spiritual becoming and a denominational territorialisation.

### Conclusions

To analyse atmosphere in ecclesial practices is to acknowledge the claim that «spaces are NOT constructed by discourse alone, and thus are not configured solely to be read»<sup>130</sup>. Whereas ethnographic accounts of ecclesial practices tend to focus on narratives and liturgy, it is the unsayable (and unreadable) that is cru-

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<sup>127</sup> «Traurig würde ich nicht sagen. Verhalten eben in dem Sinn, dass es im Gegensatz zu diesem modernen 'Praise and Worship' [steht]. Das ist nach meinem Dafürhalten ganz klar keine Anbetung in Geist und Wahrheit».

<sup>128</sup> Men and women sit separated by gender. Men are encouraged to pray, preach and to take on responsibility within the organisation of the church, women are encouraged to listen and are prohibited from preaching or leading the service in any way.

<sup>129</sup> «The strata are judgments of God; stratification in general is the entire system of the judgment of God (but the earth, or the body without organs, constantly eludes that judgment, flees and becomes destratified, decoded, deterritorialized)» (G. Deleuze - F. Guattari, *op. cit.*, p. 45).

<sup>130</sup> M. Bonta - J. Protevi, *Deleuze and geophilosophy. A guide and glossary*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2004, p. 40.

cial in the emergence of identity and difference, doctrine and denomination. Yet, to grasp the intensive experiences in worship services which congregants tell of and the particular atmospheres to which these experiences are linked, one needs an epistemology different from that of the discursive and textual realm of ecclesial doctrine. Thus, as it occupies a sphere of ineffability within the Closed Brethren discourse, music can become a means of knowing the atmosphere.

To think atmosphere in and through music means to pay special attention to the movement suggestions as proposed by Schmitz. By arguing for a methodological movement ontology, I have tried to engage with various movements as they cohere in Closed Brethren worship services: the intimate becomings as worshipers «seek the throne of God» on the one hand, and the stabilisation of a particular congregational form and rigid musical doctrine over generations, on the other hand.

The examples suggest that music as atmosphere is neither just an expression of an allegedly pre-existing devotion (*being*) nor just a smooth space of affective divine encounter and intensive *becoming*. In fact, it is due to its very *smoothness* and its non-decomposability that the atmosphere turns into a generative power when it comes to its repetition. In the weekly reiteration of the atmosphere, congregational practices and their concomitant dogmatic consolidate persistently.

In this repetition the atmosphere is not vague and ephemeral, but is itself a determining force, productive of stratification, identity (both on the level of the individual and the group), and affective denominational difference. As such, the notion of atmosphere clears the opposition and hierarchy of (theological) discourse and (ecclesial) practice, where the former is commonly assumed to determine the latter. When attending to the atmosphere, however, this linear causality discourse and practice is obscured. The concept of the atmosphere equally merges the distinction of music and (moral) meaning, reality and representation<sup>131</sup> as both practice and discourse, sonic affect and moral judgement are inextricably and non-hierarchically linked in the atmospheric motion.

But let us go back to the position of the subject by approaching the notion of atmosphere once again through sound. Ears

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<sup>131</sup> See K. Stewart, *Atmospheric attunements*, «Environment and planning D. Society and space» 29/3 (2011), pp. 445-453, here p. 452.

are inevitably exposed to sonic vibration since they cannot close up against sound. Thus, the subject «cannot not participate – that is, assume a relationship, for before or beyond being the indication of a concept, category, value or desire, the sound of music grips the body, enters the body, solicits the body's participation, the corporeal consense, the emotion»<sup>132</sup>. Instead of apprehending this condition in terms of agency, where the subject is then considered as being inferior to sound by becoming the object of motion, it is now possible to describe this nexus in terms of an affective involvement in the atmospheric situation – primarily corporeal, that is, with the felt body and not emotional – by means of movement suggestions. To assume an identity, that is, to ascribe to oneself or dissociate from the spatially poured out feelings/atmospheres is a second order effect.

From this it follows that subjects are not in a secluded *outside* of the atmosphere or *inside* themselves, in a space of agency to act upon the atmospheric motion, but they already are – indeed *become* – in the atmospheric currents from where they emerge and further unfold their becomings and positions. They are in the middle, all along involved in what is termed unsayable – the atmospheric, the musical, the numinous. Then, action is always reaction, sonority is always resonance, vibration is reverberation, being is always already becoming, substantial is already relational, movement is already in between, transversal, and not from one position to the other. As Closed Brethren worshipers attend services to experience transformation, to *re-*sonate and to *react* to the atonement which forms the centre of their weekly worship, music as atmosphere is a vital tool in these intimate spiritual becomings. At the end of the worship service, worshipers have ideally engaged in a process they sincerely desire, that is, to be further transformed into their Lord's image.

Since both discourse and practice are second order effects, a study of situations of music making should begin with the atmospheric and should grasp the meanings and moral values people ascribe to certain sonic instances through the lens of the atmosphere; for it is the atmospheric that precedes and discloses the particular, the practice and the discursive. Just as both atmosphere and the numinous, music commonly occupies a realm of ineffability, undermines notions of inside and outside, is eph-

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<sup>132</sup> M. Cobussen - N. Nielsen, *Music and ethics*, Farnham-Surrey-Burlington, Ashgate, 2012, p. 105.

meral and vague, «present and absent» and «indeterminate with regard to the distinction between subject and object»<sup>133</sup>.

Hence, I propose that musicology holds invaluable potential to contribute to the recently emerging concept of atmosphere, that is, to advance an epistemology of the atmospheric through music. On the other hand, Schmitz's elaborate *New phenomenology* holds potential for a musicology where music just as atmosphere is not reductively conceptualised as a constellation, but rather construed as situation, where meaningfulness is not attributable to singular elements or their relations. Music is then no longer to be analysed as a system of signification or a performance practice, but as an atmospheric motion; an atmosphere that is provocative of relational processes of affective communitisation in collective atmospheres and social-cultural territorialisation in cyclic repetition as it equally affords intensive *becomings*, while worshipers shift and cross their world's edge.

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<sup>133</sup> B. Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 80.