

## polylog Nr. 51 (June 2024)

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The philosophical concept of atmosphere in the sense of spatially perceptible moods originates in German phenomenology. Its precursors include Willy Hellpach (1939), Ludwig Binswanger (1955), Friedrich Otto von Bollnow (1963), and Hubert Tellenbach (1968). It was not until 1969 that Hermann Schmitz undertook the first attempt to study atmosphere in a systematic way. However, it was Gernot Böhme who paved the way for today's boom in the studies of atmosphere. In the 1990s, he drew on the concept of atmosphere from Hermann Schmitz's *New Phenomenology* and combined it with Heidegger's concept of disposedness (*Befindlichkeit*). On this basis, he redefined aesthetics as aisthetics (theory of sensory knowledge) and thus added new categories to Schmitz's concepts of atmosphere, the atmospheric (*Atmosphärisches*) and quasi-thing (*Halbding*). The German pioneers of atmosphere based their theories exclusively on European sources. Greek antiquity was central to Hermann Schmitz's historical reconstruction of the ontology of emotional space, while Böhme referred to the German mystics. And both researchers cited numerous examples from German literature, mainly from Goethe and the Romantic period.

The broad acceptance of the concept of atmosphere later led to the classification into atmospheres primary (physical-climatic), secondary (social) and tertiary (in the media) (Christiane Heibach, 2012). Currently, the concept of atmosphere is widely used in studies of literature, media, film and theater, theories of architecture and design, pedagogy, political science, and even psychiatry and economic psychology. The omnipresence of atmospheres even inspired Tonino Griffero in 2014 to develop the project for a new discipline called "atmospherology", whose mission is to clarify the ontological, epistemological, medial, social and aesthetic dimensions of atmospheres.

The international reception of the theory of atmosphere began with the establishment of interdisciplinary networks. Noteworthy here is the "Ambiances Network" around the sociologist Jean-Paul Thibaud, with also its own journal. This project was followed by English translations and anthologies in the book series "Atmospheric Spaces" (Mimesis International, Milan) and in Anglo-American publishers. Meanwhile, the complexity and diversity of atmospheric generation and experience advocate non-Western perspectives that approach this concept in different contexts (geographical, ecological, historical, ethical, political and religious). Scholars who have contributed include Tadashi Ogawa (2008, 2021), Feng Peng (2014), Yuho Hisayama (2014), Tien-Deng Yu (2015), Rolf Elberfeld (2018), Matthias Obert (2019) and Zhuofei Wang (2021). A chapter on "More than Western Epistemologies and Atmospheres" will be included in the forthcoming "Routledge Handbook on Ambiances and Atmospheres" (ed. by Damien Masson et al.). Furthermore, in recent years there have been several exchanges between Europe and East Asia on the theory of atmosphere, including guest lectures (e.g. by Gernot Böhme) and conferences (e.g. the 9th International Congress of Oriental Aesthetics 2019). In this way, not only have terminological difficulties in translations been discovered, but also consonances with the relevant thinking of traditional Far Eastern philosophies. Such exchanges thus open up perspectives of transforming phenomena of cultural diffusion into fruitful intercultural polylogues.

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