

Contingent Agencies

Inquiring into the Emergence
of Atmospheres

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(eds.)

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My article considers atmospheres as the agency of a relational affair among lived-bodies, sensing, tasting, reflecting, and notating them on different planes:

On a physical plane, where lived-bodies register the elementary vibes in a room: the coloring of a local light situation, the sounds, acoustically gathering in a local area of space, etc. On a sensual plane, on which a lived-body starts to develop a sense of taste that allows a body to atmospherically feel the emotive quality of the relational affairs it is in touch with.

On a self-reflexive mental plane, on which a lived-body finally starts to detach from its local atmosphere to reflect on the outmost cosmic atmosphere that every body shares with all other bodies universally. Like a public park, open for all.

In *Tímaios*, Plato addressed this ultimate atmosphere under the name Khôra (χώρα). In the first place, Khôra is an empty, formless space, separable from its content. On the other hand, *s/he-id* receives all forms that appear in space. Like a nurse of becoming, Khôra even takes care that the appearance of things in space matters well into the course of their delivery. However, one of the most astonishing aspects of Khôra comprises Khôra's inflammability. *S/he-id* can catch fire. Plato's most famous disciple, Aristotle, therefore called Khôra first matter, literally first wood (πρώτη ὕλη).

But what actually inflames first matter? Tantric philosophies assumed that the aspirations of one's heart induce the mattering of first matter. Once a heart is in touch with this outstanding form of matter that covers all forms of beings, it cordially inflames first matter with the flame of one's aspirations. The tantric term for this touch is *vimarśa* (Skora 2007, 424).

Crossing binarities

I am struggling with an untimely philosophical problem in this article. Namely, with Khôra (χώρα), a term, that occurred in Plato's *Tímaios* about 2,500 years ago. Even most distinguished experts in the field of ancient Greek philosophy could not yet find a stable interpretation of this nomadic, wandering term (Derrida 1993). As if Khôra would be no stable matter at all, but a chaotic, instable form of matter, a process of mattering rather than solid matter. Matter in the making, and not as an already fully constituted form of matter that has already mattered in fact (Barad 2007, 3–38. Manning and Böhler 2014, 20).

Even the transliteration of the first letter of this word is instable: should I write Khôra (χώρα), or Chôra? And what is *her/his-id's* gender? Shall we address Khôra as *she*? Or *he*? Or *id*¹? Or all at once, *s/he-id*?

I would vote for *s/he-id*. Because if one makes the spatial aspect the agency of one's reflection, Khôra actually appears to be a neutral space. Space, insofar as one can separate *id* from the things *id* contains. In this respect, Khôra assumes the form of an empty container that exists in *id-self*, non-identical with the materials that emerge in space.

But this is only one aspect of Khôra, says *Tímaios* in his speech on the cosmogenesis of Nature in Plato's *Tímaios* (Plato 2021, 47E–64D). Because the khoratic concept of space does actually imply additional aspects, which even seem to contradict this aspect of space as a neutral, empty container, that is, an *id*.

First and foremost, it is the receptive quality of space that is incompatible with the container model of space. Because, once space is actually ready to host all kinds of matters and things to emerge, space is obviously no empty container anymore, but at least potentially filled with all kinds of spatial matters and things. When light, for instance, expands in space, space is filled with a bright waving body; at least in the area of its expansion. The same happens, once a sound expands in space. The area of space, in which it expands also starts to wave, now on the acoustic spectrum. In such cases, space evidently no longer appears as an entirely empty container, but as the receptacle of a luminous and acoustic form of mattering that actually expands in space in a particular wave-form, with a certain wavelength and speed and within a certain spectrum, etc.

Waving bodies

Even before the heavens appeared in space, says *Tímaios* (Plato 2021, 48B), Khôra, the void, actually received the mattering of the four elemental bodies—fire, earth, water, air—and ether, which *Tímaios* perceived to be the most sublime form of an air-like atmosphere (Plato 2021, 58D). Ever since then, at least, space *id-self* has lost its first quality of being just a neutral container, for now *id* has become a vibrant matter (Bennett 2010), atmospherically filled with all kinds of surging materials, which actually did emerge in *id* with distinct qualities. These first bodies were not yet solid things or particles according to *Tímaios*, but rather waving expansions of space *id-self*:

— 1 — I use “id” as an allusion to Sigmund Freud’s “Es” which is the unconscious, instinctual source of bodily needs, emotions, desires, and wants, which are already operative at birth.

Surging lightscares, surging soundscapes, surging airscares, surging landscapes, and even surging particles. They actually stimulated space within **id-self** by making **id** a vibrant matter that started to taste earthy, airy, watery, fiery, etheric, wherever these elemental bodies emerged. Space **id-self** thus became, at least partially, a waving matter.

Changing the perspective from the empty-container model to the perception of space as the receptacle-of-vibrant-matters actually did change Khôra's sex and gender according to Tímaios. Space shifted from the neutral **id** to a vibrant **she.** Because the **she-aspect** of Khôra is precisely a space ready to receive the countless forms of waving matters in **herself.** Being a receptacle of all sorts of matter and things that once atmospherically appeared in space, Khôra thus became a formidable **she-id.**

This double face of space marks one of the core dilemmas Tímaios faced while he was searching for the very first principles at work in the cosmogenesis of Nature. In fact, right in the middle of his talk, his mind became foggy and confused. It seemed as if his speech had reached a dead end. Losing the self-confidence of his past argumentations, Tímaios slowly started to realize, step by step, the far-reaching consequences of his insight into the double nature of Khôra: Is space an empty container or the receptacle of vibrant matter, or both at once?

It was the relational affair between space & matter that actually started to hit, trouble, haunt, and blur his mind right in the middle of his talk. Little by little, Tímaios had to grasp that the two first-principles, namely Being and Becoming, which he so far has assumed to be enough to consistently understand the first-principles of Nature, are actually not enough. For when the relation between space & matter became the agency of his reflection and philosophical inquiry, he finally realized that the very Nature of this subject compels him to postulate another, a third first-principle. To consistently explain the first-principles at work in the cosmogenesis of Nature, one needs a third principle, capable of mediating ($\chi_{(\delta\text{ra})}$) between the first two principles Being $\chi_{(\delta\text{ra})}$ and Becoming. "We did not distinguish a third entity at the time as we thought it enough to have these two" (Plato 2021, 49A), says Tímaios to his listeners: Socrates, Critias, and Hermocrates. He had to confess that this insight was not at all there right at the beginning of his speech. But in order to allow both ends Being and Becoming to be entangled and intra-connected (Barad 2007), one actually needs a space that mediates between them. Otherwise, Tímaios argues, Nature would split into two separate parts that would not be capable of communicating with each other at all. Without Khôra, the third principle, Being and Becoming, would be no relational affair.

But even though Tímaios became more and more convinced by virtue of his mindful investigations into the matter to accept the argument that one needs a third first-principle to consistently explain the cosmogenesis of Nature, he was still not sure in this critical phase of his talk, how to name and define **id**?

Because even now, while “the argument seems to compel us,” his attempt to bring this “obscure [third] form in words” (Plato 2021, 49A) still remains a matter of concern and intense research for him. First, because thus far he has lacked the need to posit such a third principle among Being- $\chi_{(\delta ra)}$ -Becoming at all. And second, because this third principle seems to be an instable matter in *id-self,* a wandering womb of becoming, which actually resists all final ends and definitions. Tímaios is very explicit about this. “What should we understand its capacity and nature to be?” (Plato 2021, 49A), he asks his listeners, addressing their hearts, and probably also his own. What is it, that actually makes Being- $\chi_{(\delta ra)}$ -Becoming a cross-relational, intra-agential, many-layered eco-logical affair (Barad 2007, Bennett 2010, Guattari 2000, Deleuze 1988)?

After a wavering while, during which Tímaios’s mind was re-considering everything he had said so far once again with fresh eyes, he finally risked to carefully propose a first answer concerning the very Nature and capacity of this third principle to his listeners and to us, the readers of Plato’s *Tímaios*. The best way to characterize this aspect of Khôra’s Nature is to consider *her-id* to be “the receptacle of all coming into being, like its nurse” (Plato 2021, 49A).

The pulsating space of vibrant matter is now carefully related to the figure of a nurse, namely a nurse of becoming. *She,* Khôra, being a receptacle of becoming, actually even takes care of her deliveries in space, like a nurse. In order to feel eco-logically at home (Guattari 2000) in the womb of Nature with all the matterings that she receives, one finally has to assume *her-id* to be a third principle. That is, a space that constantly welcomes everything that comes into being in the course of its delivery. In this respect, *she,* Khôra, appears as the space of birth. *She* takes care that the delivery of things in space actually works out well. This mode of care overrides, indeed, the all too simple concept of space as a neutral substratum (*hypkeímenon*) and empty container that underlies everything that appears in *her-id* in the course of time.

In an interview that I carried out with Erin Manning and Brian Massumi in 2014, they used the beautiful and telling formulation “care for the event” to bring this matter to a crucial point (Manning and Böhler 2014, 14–15, Massumi and Böhler 2014, 38). Plato’s nurse of becoming not only cares for the birth of things that have already been delivered, but *she-id* also takes care of those virtual events in which something starts to matter that so far has not yet gleamed, flashed, and mattered. The formulation “care for the event” thus becomes a matter-of-future-events that still wait for their hour to matter once.

In the course of Tímaios’s talk, Khôra, space *id-self,* continuously gains more and more aspects and female attributes. These female attributes apparently become most intense once the field of vibrant matter, operative in the womb of Khôra, finally becomes a pregnant matter of a future tense. Like an angel of the Earth, *she,* Khôra, actually takes care that

the mattering of a virtual future to come will have taken place once, and finally, will have worked out well by its delivery within the manifest realm of Nature herself (*natura naturata*).

It is precisely this virtual aspect where **she** and **id** are also transformed into a **he.** Because insofar as **she** is giving birth to something and/or somebody that so far only potentially existed, **she** is inherently drawn toward a virtual form of matter, namely a **he.** This virtual form of matter is actually full of unborn possibilities that are still waiting in a virtual cloud for their hour to collapse once. I have borrowed the terms virtual cloud and collapse from quantum physics to allude to the strange similarities between contemporary physics and Plato's *Tímaios*.

In this transformative passage from the actual to the virtual, **she,** the nurse of becoming, actually is transformed into a **he.** Into *materia-in-potentia* or virtual matter.

S/he-id, being structurally all these energetic aspects at once, *Khôra* finally allows a virtual cloud to matter once and thus to immanate (Agamben 1999, 220–239) in space. Since *Khôra* is all these aspects at once, **s/he-id,** the sex and gender orientation of *Khôra* cannot be reduced to one of these aspects. **S/he-id** is simultaneously mother, child, father, and nurse, says *Tímaios*, because only the contingent co-operation of all these factors actually fulfills the creative assemblage of being able to let something matter in such a manner that the thing in question thereby actually appears anew in space within a concrete local situation and site-specific circumstances. “So let this concisely argued account be the one that receives my vote; there is being, space and becoming, these three, even before the heaven came into being” (Plato 2021, 52D–E).

The third principle, *Khôra*, must be even older than heaven, argues *Tímaios*, since even the planetary constellation of a sky once appeared in space. And since this third principle, *Khôra*, occurs between the other two first-principles Being- $\chi_{(\hat{o}ra)}$ -Becoming, right in the middle of their cross-over χ , it always remains hard to determine *Khôra*'s definitive meaning once and for all in a stable, and not just in a tentative, nomadic manner.

Khôra (χώρα):

Crossing atmospheres χ with solid particles
Fading in ... fading out. Fading in for a while, fading out again,
after a while — Waving intervals, over, and over again. Appearing-
Disappearing, over and over again ...

Does Khôra, this movement among being and non-being,
not haunt us all and always, at least as long as one lives? Is
s/he-id therefore not exemplarily a matter that matters for all
and none, to bring the subtitle of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke
Zarathustra* into this problematic matter?

For most of us, Khôra probably seems to be an idle problem
of philosophers only. Something that is insignificant for the
majority of people in their everydayness. But in fact, I would
like to claim, *s/he-id* isn't. Because:

Being-born-in-space,

spacing,

which phenomenon does actually matter more for all of us,

especially since we are already incorporated bodies in space?

I, myself.

My readers,

and, and, and ... all the non-human and over-human bodies,

with whom we, my readers and myself,

share our being-in-the-world collectively, contingently?

As a relational affair,

our being-in-the-world is exposed to all these human and non-human-bodies,

which surround myself in a worldwide manner.

And all these bodies, human, non-human, and over-human,

have taken place in space before my own delivery in 1963.

Waving landscapes and solid particles,

which trigger my lived-body and stimulate its sense of taste atmospherically.

All these molecules, plants, animals, humans, and over-human bodies,

which share their lives with my own embodied being in space,

all of them are part of my *natura naturata*, that is,

of that part of Nature which has already completed

its birth in time & space as a first perfection.

Tímaios did highlight this matter himself in his speech. The very
first bodies, he argues, which emerged at the very beginning
of the creation of a universe in space were not at all human
bodies, of course, but waving matters: the bodies of the elements.
Their bodies started to matter first as plane atmospheres, even
before our planetary sky appeared in space. Their delivery in
space transformed certain areas of space at the very beginning
into vibrant fields. Some scholars therefore even compared Khôra
with field theories in contemporary physics (Erler 2006, 460).

All the solid bodies and particles that we sense today are
therefore already secondary matters for Tímaios (*materia
secunda*). They emerged chronologically on the basis of these
atmospheric bodies: the particles of inorganic matter first,
and, once planet Earth herself had reached a more or less solid
form within the heavenly sphere among all the other planets
— the plant, animal, human and over-human bodies could also

start to emerge in space in the evolutionary uprising on Earth. Step by step, performing one quantum-jump after the other, all these bodies chronologically unfolded finally on the surface of our planet, one after the other. And each of them is itself a highly complex assemblage of a multitude of bodies that contemporarily constitute their coherent Nature and cohesion.

From today's perspective, all these bodies, which actually surround our lived-bodies, have already emerged in space a long time ago. Countless mattering(s). They already took place in the geography and genealogy of our planet Earth, which today is actually still in the making. And even if more than human forms and bodies would pop up in the uprising course of our galloping times in a trans- or post-humanist future, they as well would have to appear in space, at least once, to actualize their virtual possibility within the manifest realm of Nature. Even a trans- or post-humanist species would therefore have to immanate in Khôra and ask for the special hour, where **s/he-id** would be ready to receive their over-human forms in the wake of a trans- and post-humanist delivery. And the nurse of such a becoming would have to take care that their future appearance in space actually will have worked out well at the end, at least once.

Khôra (χώρα): The taste of atmospheres
If we reconsider the question of the four elements and their waving expansions in space, we now have to add that the expansion of the elemental bodies actually disseminates a particular flavor and taste while they emerge in a certain area of space. The entire area of their expansion actually starts to taste watery, fiery, windy, earthy, says Tímaios, because their waving presence in space always possesses a certain flavor. "And yet, the nurse of becoming, rendered watery and fiery, and receiving the forms of earth and air, and adopting whatever other characteristics are a consequence of these, presents a variegated appearance" (Plato 2021, 52D–52E).

Wherever the elemental bodies expand atmospherically in a local area of space, this areal of space **id-self** acquires a certain quality, taste, and flavor, insofar as **id-self** thereby becomes luminous, bright, hot, fiery; dry, wet, watery; calm, stormy, windy; light, heavy, earthy, and so on, wherever these etheric bodies appear atmospherically. "It would therefore be most correct," says Tímaios, while continuing his speech on Khôra, "to describe it as follows: the part that has become fiery appears at the same time as fire, the moistened part as water, and as earth and air also, to the extent that it receives imitations of these" (Plato 2021, 51B. Cf. 52D–53A).

Space is not just open for the atmospheric expansion of etheric bodies, but the areas of space, fulfilled with a certain amalgam of vibrant lightscapes, soundscapes, airtscapes, and earthy landscapes themselves receive the elemental flavor and taste of these waving atmospheres. They actually fill an area of space with a particular value of brightness, sound-intensity, temperature, waving-expansion, etc.

“And yet, the nurse of becoming [Khôra], rendered watery and fiery, and receiving the forms of earth and air, and adopting whatever other characteristics are a consequence of these, presents a variegated appearance. And because of being filled with powers that were neither similar nor equally balanced, no part of her was equally balanced; rather, being swayed irregularly in all directions she was shaken by those powers, and as she moved, she in turn, shook them once more” (Plato 2021, 52D–52E).

Light-waves, sound-waves, ocean-waves, electromagnetic waves, ~~~~~ waves seem to expand everywhere in space. All these vibrant matters actually disseminate omnidirectionally in a turbulent, diffracting manner, says Tímaios. One could say with Tanja Traxler, a Vienna-based quantum physicist and philosopher, that nothingness matters in such a case, insofar as these elemental bodies actually stimulate the void *id-self* to fluctuate and wave (Traxler 2023).

Should the first platonic bodies therefore be considered to be a sort of vacuum-fluctuation (Barad 2012, 14/39), to once again borrow a term from contemporary quantum physics?

Atmospherically vibrating spaces?

Vibrant matter?

Waving atmospheres?

Res extensa in the middle of a void, stimulating *id* to fluctuate in

id-self as a self-affection of space within *id-self*?

“And as they move, borne continually in one direction or another, they are separated just like materials shaken and sifted by sieves and instruments for purifying grain: the dense and heavy components go one way, while the loose and light components are carried to a different place and settle there. The four kinds were then shaken in this way by the receptacle [Khôra], which was itself in motion like an instrument for shaking” (Plato 2021, 52E–53A).

Shaking space, fulfilled with the quality of the four elements, the elements started to behave differently according to their dense Nature. While Khôra functions as the shaking sieve *her/him-id-self*, the dense areas of the elementary spacing constituted the sphere of the Earth, while the light and loose energetic fields went upwards and settled there, the solar sphere of heaven. At the same time, air and water fell into the middle region between them.

Therefore, still today, every lived-body finds *id-self* right in the middle of a local atmosphere with a local color and special flavor. And every lived-body is, in addition, actually able to taste *id* atmospherically by finding itself right in the middle of a local atmosphere. In fact, they are still here, these elemental, atmospheric, waving bodies. Calm, smooth, beautiful, sometimes. But in moments of atmospheric catastrophes, these elements flood and hit us all in stormy, tremendously destructive manners (Serres 1985).

It is well known that Plato's most prominent disciple, Aristotle, actually renamed Khôra terminologically by rebaptizing *her/him-id* with the name πρῶτη ὕλη, first matter. Khôra is, first of all, a first, that is to say, a formless, virtual form of matter. The very first stuff, cover, or even atmosphere that actually allows all other planes and forms to appear in space in the evolutionary course of time as its etheric foundation and virtual basis (*hypokeímenon*). In its most ancient literal meaning, *hylé* actually meant wood, which is an important hint. Because first matter has actually been perceived to be inflammable, like wood. *Id* can catch fire, which is finally its most profound and sublime quality. One can burn it (Plato 2021, 51B)!

Many scholars, and even such a prominent philosopher as F.W.J. Schelling, have therefore interpreted Aristotle's first matter to be a form of materia-in-potentia. That is, a virtual form of matter that has not yet mattered in space in the course of time, but "is" nevertheless virtually real, since it has slept in the womb-of-becoming since the very beginning of the cosmogenesis of Nature. There it hides all possibilities that have waited ever since for their hour to matter once. *Sub specie aeternitatis*, to borrow a term from the fifth book of Spinoza's *Ethics*. From the perspective of eternity, eternal possibilities that so far have not yet mattered, are, in fact, actually not manifest in space, but they are virtually real under the perspective of eternity, in which one perceives *Nature as an Event* (Debaise 2017). That is, as a space, eternally in the making (Manning 2014, 20).

When Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*, claimed that virtual possibilities have their own form of reality, since "the virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual" (Deleuze 1968, 208), he actually does touch precisely the ancient problem of first matter: matter-in-the-virtual-state-of-a-potential. This virtual form of matter comprises not only the possibilities, which have already mattered in space (*natura naturata*), but also the virtual possibilities, which so far had not yet collapsed, and therefore did not yet flash and gleam in time and space. But even though virtual matter, *materia-in-potentia*, is, in fact, no manifest form of matter at present, the virtual cloud of eternal possibilities nevertheless has to be considered to be *virtually real,* precisely because this virtual form of matter can actually be inflamed, like wood, at any moment, and thereby catch fire. While virtual matter is the stuff that can burn, the aspirations of one's heart (ὄρεξις) are actually the matches, capable to inflame the most sublime principle of matter: matter in the state of potency.

Being an integral part of the present condition, in which one actually finds oneself in the middle of a world, the virtual is, indeed, actually real, but not actually manifest in time and space. Though the virtual is, in fact, an essential part of our integral Nature (Aurobindo 1999), insofar as our very Nature actually includes always a virtual cloud of possibilities as the virtual

dimension of any contemporary constellation, the virtual has not yet mattered, but nevertheless is real *sub specie aeternitatis*, since it could matter once in a future to come.

In this very sense, Khôra is not just a space of all the forms *id* currently contains in fact (*natura naturata*), but also the space of those virtual matters, Khôra is still pregnant of. Namely, in the virtual Off.

The space of a heart

In tantric philosophies this inflammable first matter does actually catch fire by the aspirations of one's heart. They trigger the golden rain of virtual possibilities, which so far resided hidden in the emptiness of a heart. The inflammable void, *materia-in-potentia*, thus becomes a matter of the heart with all its conative longings, needs, desires, wishes, aspirations, will.

Since everybody's heart continuously inhabits and inflames the emptiness of first matter atmospherically with the assemblage of desires and longings that constitutes the conatus of a body (Spinoza 1994, 152–197), first matter and the aspirations of one's heart actually gain the character of an intimate relational affair in tantric philosophies (Mueller-Ortega 1989). It is therefore more than just a metaphor when Aristotele called Khôra πρώτη ὕλη: the first wood (*hylé*), that is, the first inflammable matter.

The relational affair between the conatus-of-a-lived-body and first-matter is therefore not simply an abstract and general one, but an intimate affair at work among the core longings of a lived-body [$\chi_{(Khôra)}$] (read: versus) the-emptiness-of-a-heart (Dyczkowski 1992, 42–43)—as the most sublime and outstanding habitat, a lived-body actually inhabits in a pulsating, etheric manner. I therefore suggest in this article, that one should address and call this first, most subtle and outstanding atmosphere at stake in the unfolding of first matter, the inflammable space of somebody's heart.

In ancient Indian philosophies, this vibrating, waving quality of space (*spanda*) has often been addressed as a pulsating ocean. The Hymn of Creation (X.129) in the oldest of all Vedas, the R̥gveda (~1500 BCE), for instance, does address the ocean of the inconscient (*apraketam salilam* X.129.3), which resides at the bottom of the ocean of a heart (*hṛdyāt samudrāt* IV.58.5). From there, the rivers of clarity (*ghṛtasya dhārāḥ* IV.58.2) do actually arise, which animate our bodies and flood the cosmic Nature. It is said that the spiritual poets and seers, by virtue of their intense research and mindful investigations into their heart space, were finally able to purify these waters of clarity in such a way that they found a bright path right in the middle of their hearts, which allowed their energies to flow upwards and reach their final destination, namely, the upper ocean of their hearts. This upper ocean is addressed by the spiritual poets as the solar ocean of a luminous sphere beyond the mental sphere, from where the golden rain of virtual possibilities actually descends and thereby successively immanates in space in the course of time, step by step (Aurobindo 1998, 106–107).

The daybreak

On the cover page of his book *Daybreak* (1997), Nietzsche has consciously chosen a quote from the R̥gveda as the overall motto for his book, which brings this entire matter of a virtual form of matter to a dense point (*aṇu*, *bindu*): “So many daybreaks will be given birth that so far have not yet gleamed? R̥gveda” (translation A.B.).²

The virtual that resides veiled in the emptiness of a heart is addressed here as a daybreak that has thus far not yet gleamed. It veils all mattering(s) and events in the virtual cloud of unborn possibilities, which are waiting to flash once.

In this particular sense, the daybreak Nietzsche himself was intimately longing for in *Beyond Good and Evil*—a book with the telling subtitle *Prelude of a Philosophy of the Future*—was actually not just a general, but also a quite personal affair. What he pled for in his prelude of a philosophy to come was actually the performative inflammation of the birth of a new species of philosophers. The delivery of these philosophers of the future is marked by a “dangerous perhaps” (Nietzsche 2002, p.6), because he could not know in advance and promise for sure, whether their delivery in space would actually happen or not. Perhaps the virtual object of his aspirations will appear once, perhaps not. The flames of such a heart are, indeed, concerned with an unstable, virtual form of matter, because, like Plato’s nurse of becoming, Nietzsche had to take care in advance of the possible birth of a new species of philosophers, whose presentation has not yet gleamed and not yet flashed thus far (Nancy 1993). In this very sense, Nietzsche claimed that this new species of philosophers of the future differ from their predecessors, in particular by virtue of their different “taste and inclination.” a special taste that allowed them to taste the contingent future of a dangerous perhaps in advance. Therefore, Nietzsche could characterize them as those “whose taste and inclination are somehow [even] the reverse of those we have seen so far” (Nietzsche 2002, p.6. Cf. Böhler 2020, 2019a, 2019b, 2017a, 2017b).

Probably Nietzsche considered Plato his most important antagonist in the entire history of European philosophy (Böhler 2019c), because both were artist-philosophers in the strict sense of this word. That is, untimely philosophers, concerned with the speculative creation of a future to come rather than philosophers of a past or present tense. Plato, the last artist-philosopher in ancient Greek philosophies, Nietzsche, the first one in (post-)modern times. They both developed a new sense of taste toward a future to come in their times that started to attract them philosophically from the very bottom of their hearts. Both of them therefore knew very well that Khôra was not just an amalgam of already given particles and matters—“Long live physics!” shouts Nietzsche in his *Gay Science* (Nietzsche 1974, 263 [4.335])—but a process, in which matter comes into being in the process of triggering eternal possibilities, which still rest in a virtual cloud, that so far has not yet collapsed as a flashing event.

— 2 — Original German on the cover page: “Es giebt so viele Morgenröthen, die noch nicht geleuchtet haben. R̥gveda.”

It is indeed difficult to determine the relation of the *Noûs* toward this third principle, says Tímaios (Plato 2021, 51B). Because, as I would like to claim in this text, it is the space of a heart that is actually at stake in the intimate relation among the *Noûs* and the third first-principle, Khôra, the first inflammable space and matter.

Cut / Notation:

Let us start here again with a fresh eye right in the middle of my article to slowly get rid of a conceptual reflection mode, and shift into a notation mode. From now on, I would like to focus my awareness on the site-specific atmospheres I was actually in touch with as a lived-body in space during the research process of the PEEK project *Contingent Agencies* led by Nikolaus Gansterer and Alex Arteaga.

Why am I even able to notate atmospheres?

In the first place, I would say, because of a long genealogy and geology of mattering events that have already taken place on our planet Earth and in the Heavens long before I was born in 1963. The atmospheric bodies, which I do sense and taste momentarily while I write down these lines—light, air, water, earth, and ether—emerged in space at the very beginning of the cosmogenesis of Nature, in which I momentarily find myself imbedded as a lived-body in space. All these inorganic bodies, which surround me and constitute the basis of my own body-assemblages of atoms, electrons, molecules, and so on—already mattered in space billions of years ago out of the womb of eternal possibilities. In addition, plant bodies, animal bodies, human, and over-human bodies have been generated in the evolutionary course of time on our planet Earth, step by step. They all appeared on Earth long before I was born myself. Artifacts were produced by others before my birth, nuclear power stations, military weapons, houses, chairs, plastics. They all occurred in space before my own delivery. Thus, they became contemporaries and part of the khoratic atmosphere that I am currently in touch with here and now. Both, from outside and from inside my lived-body.

I currently populate the Earth with all these contemporaries and find myself right in the middle of them. What a variety of relational affairs, waving-atmospheres, and waving-particles. And beyond this, they all not only surround me, but also ground me. My lived-body is actually made of all these mattering and vibrant particles, which were already available at my birth to constitute my lived-body.

And even beyond all these bodies, which have already mattered, there are still all the virtual planes, matters, forms, things, and particles which have not yet mattered and therefore still rest today in the virtual cloud of a future to come.

If I change from the conceptual reflection mode to the notation mode, I actually find my lived-body situated right in the middle of Khôra in a particular local atmosphere and a site-specific situation.

Alex Arteaga and Nikolaus Gansterer provided us with an open schema, how a notation could be structured. I will now present my readers four notations on First Matter, Khôra-Landscape, “Vimarśa-Drawings, and Vimarśa-Video” to describe the situation in which my reflections and writings actually took place atmospherically to re-enact these atmospheres in words. The notation mode will also change my style of writing.

Notation 1a

First Matter



Actually, I am writing this text in my private office, 1080 Vienna, Pfeilgasse 8/38, on March 23, 2023, 1:17 p.m. But also I went through these text passages several times already on other days. The atmosphere of my private office did not change dramatically during all these days. It is quite a silent space. I just hear the cooling system of our fridge, otherwise I don't sense any sound in particular. Today, no birds are singing. Almost no wind whistles. The temperature in my office is comfortable, about 21 degrees Celsius. The light is bright, the sky cloudy, with some blue patches. This peaceful atmosphere actually allowed me in the last hours to concentrate almost entirely on my writing. In fact, my mind was mainly concerned with Plato's *Tímaios*, and not focused on the local atmosphere in which my reflections actually took place. Nevertheless, it was there, even without noticing *id.*

Definitely, Khôra was the most prominent agency that occupied the psycho-mental awareness of my lived-body over the last hours. It was Plato's text that directed and channeled the awareness of my mind up to a large extent.

By the way, I really love this mode of writing and thinking, because not only my mind, but also my lived-body calms down in the process of writing, reading, and thinking philosophically. My entire being gets a rest and focus. Which is a quite pleasurable state of being. It is not just the brain that is engaged in thinking. What a foolish thesis. The entire body shifts into another mood, once one starts to write and think conceptually on a matter like Khôra. I would describe this bodily condition in the following way: my entire subjectivity subjects itself to the subject at stake in thinking. The addressee of thinking thus becomes the agency of my thoughts. *S/he-id* triggered them, slowly, step by step, in close contact with myself. In my experience, it was Khôra, the addressee of my text, who led the psycho-mental awareness of my lived-body through the text while I was concentrating on all the aspects of space in which I actually find myself. The entire psycho-mental awareness of my lived-body thereby became the sub-iectum of the subject I had in mind.

The atmosphere, which actually penetrated my office space, was helpful, since it allowed me to sit here in a bright, calm place and perform my reflections without being forced to momentarily focus on any turbulent atmospheric matter. No storm, no hurricane, no nuclear power accident. The elemental bodies were favorable to me. I could devote myself almost entirely to

the textual notation of a conceptual reflection on Khôra in Plato's *Tímaios*. What a privilege. I would love it if everybody were able to share this privilege—to be allowed to enter a calm state in which a philosophical meditation can be performed in a silent manner, right in the middle of a calm atmosphere.



Notation 1b

Khôra-Landscape

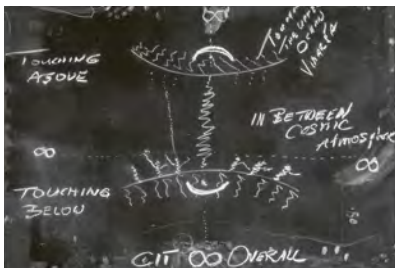
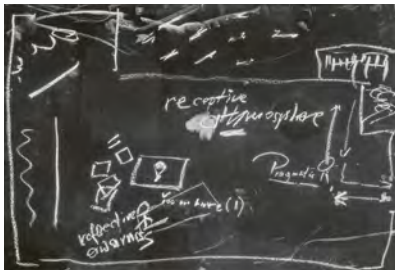
It was Sunday, March 19, 2:04 p.m. when I wrote this and the following lines some days ago. At that time, I was in Kehr-bach 2, 3662 Münichreith-Laimbach. The building, which you see in the photo, indeed carries the name Khôra. It's a retreat-place for Arts-Based philosophy, created by my wife, Susanne Valerie Granzer, and myself in 2021.

I registered suddenly the shadow of the sunlight on the floor. And there, the agricultural land with this kinglike tree on the top. And the forest in the background of the field. All these objects are co-agents of the atmosphere that constantly waves in this landscape. The local atmosphere does not exist separately from these solid objects, but *id* actually tunes and colors them momentarily. In fact, these solid objects, the floor, the tree, the forest, they all reflect and diffract the waving atmosphere of this landscape and thereby re-shape it anew in a particular, object-related manner.

Do you hear the sound of the birds there? Of course not. But I can tell you that there are almost always birds sitting in this tree there. They are waving the space acoustically while they sing.

And the wind that curls the air there? Of course, you cannot feel and hear it in the medium of a book. But probably you can sense it in an imaginative manner by recollecting memories of atmospheres that resemble this one?

My lived-body cannot not be in touch with the local atmosphere in the room that it inhabits. It cannot not be tuned, cannot not be colored, cannot not be shaped and kneaded by an abstract term or concept, but something I find myself posited in, in a local manner within a variety of atmospheric flavors. I am not sitting in an empty container, but find myself in a space, filled with an amalgam of elemental bodies and relational affairs with which I am intra-relationally involved and engaged.



Notation 2a

Vimarśa-Drawings

After more than two hours of intense debates among our key-research group on the relational affair among reflection χ (read: versus) notation in the context of the symposium *Contingent Agencies*, our discussions reached a point where I felt a strong impulse to stand up and change from the reflection mode into a notation mode. I actually followed my impulse, stood up, left the research group and went into the studio, where I took the chalkboard on which I made the following drawing a few days ago.

The drawing was inspired by Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Creation Hymn in *The Secret of the Veda*, which reads as follows:

“We find this fundamental idea of the Vedic Rishis brought out in the Hymn of Creation (Rig Veda X.129) where the sub-conscious is thus described: Darkness hidden by darkness in the beginning was this all, an ocean without mental consciousness ...out of it the One was born by the greatness of Its energy. It first moved in it as desire which was the first seed of mind. The Masters of Wisdom found out in the non-existent that which builds up the existent; in the heart they found it by purposeful impulsion and by the thought-mind. Their ray was extended horizontally; there was something above, there was something below” (Aurobindo 1998, p.106).

On September 19, I tried to draw the quasi-transcendental architecture of this passage on the black chalkboard with a white piece of chalk. Now, four days later, on September 23, 12:29 p.m., I took this drawing and put it in front of me on the floor of the studio. Today I wanted to orally articulate the sense of the drawing and describe it in words out loud to myself. At this very moment Victor Jaschke came into the room and saw me. He artistically documented the entire cross-disciplinary symposium *Contingent Agencies* on video and photography and immediately started to tape my notation with his camera.

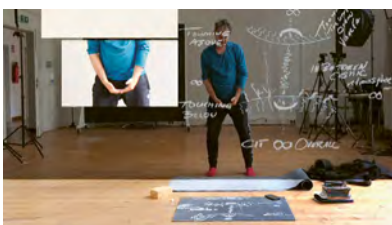
Notation 2b

Vimarśa-Video

The first part of my oral notation, recorded on the Vimarśa-Video, says:

“I am sitting in the same room as yesterday. But I am not only in this room. Because I would like to draw a map of a cosmic atmosphere, and the cosmic atmosphere is usually located in between Heaven and Earth, the above and the below.” (*In the video the drawing is now accompanied by bodily movements, which I performed while orally describing to myself the drawing from the day before in a dynamic state of yoga postures.*)

There [exists] an interesting term in Indian philosophy, *vimarśa*. It means both reflection and touching. It is [the self-reflective awareness] that comes from the root *mṛś*, which means touch.... We have a capacity to touch consciousness. And if we are touching this consciousness as the upper ocean, which you can see here in the drawing upstairs there, a reflection of that sphere of the upper ocean takes place. And that reflection ...is called a thought. It is a way of thinking that is seeing rather than a mental way of being in touch with things, [...] *pratibhā*, which is the thinking of intuition or vision (*darśana*), as they would say. *Vimarśa* performs a reflection of consciousness, [...] or even of the light of consciousness (*prakāśa*), as a way of touching this plane, this [upper] sphere of consciousness ... (*Vimarśa-Video,* first part, TC: 00:00–02:16)



What I tried to notate that day, September 23, 2022, between 12:29 and 12:34 p.m. at the Zentrum Fokus Forschung of the University for Applied Arts Vienna was an intimate, personal contact with first matter. I wanted to inflame *id* with the aspirations that actually did pop up in the course of my oral description of my former drawing *vimarśa* in the middle of my bodily yoga movements. It was an attempt to become a *khecarī*, namely somebody who actually moves in the sky of the heart. While describing the concept of *vimarśa* loudly to myself in a mindful research manner, I went through a sequence of bodily postures to establish also a sensible contact with the emptiness of the heart that my lived-body currently inhabits.

How does first matter actually taste in the middle of our research here at the Zentrum Fokus Forschung in Vienna? Moving my arms up and down, heavenward, toward *Ouranós*, and earthward, toward *Gaia*, triggered a sensitive relation of the psycho-mental awareness of my lived-body within my heart-space. Thus, I was addressing this emptiness of my heart on several layers at once: in the drawing, in my oral description of the drawing, in my mental reflections on *vimarśa*, and my bodily movements in space.

Even now, while I am watching these artifacts and trying to recall the atmosphere that appeared at that time, this special atmosphere still starts to resonate again strongly within me and thereby is even able to re-trigger a highly focused state of mind in my lived-body, but now in the calm atmosphere of my private office, Pfeilgasse 8/38, 1080 Vienna, March 26, 2023, 2:29 p.m.

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The Khôra text was performed live by Arno Böhler and Nikolaus Gansterer as part of their Translecture at the Volkstheater and Secession in Vienna in 2023. The images above were created live by Gansterer during the presentation.

Colophon

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How do atmospheres—those subtle, impermanent, non-objectified and surrounding yet intimately affective presences—come to be? What forces enable and constrain their appearance, and how do they relate to one another? How to research these complex processes in a non-reductive way?

Contingent Agencies, an artistic research project initiated by Alex Arteaga and Nikolaus Gansterer, explores the dynamic relationship between human and non-human agencies as enabling conditions for the emergence of atmospheres. This cross-disciplinary investigation is conducted through multimodal practices of notation, reflection, showing, and sharing realized in diverse media within different theoretical frameworks such as phenomenology, enactivism, and new materialism. The present book, complemented by an extensive online archive, features multiple research artifacts—including texts, drawings, photo series, diagrams, sound recordings, and video stills—as an invitation to a wider community to join the inquiry.

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