

《國立政治大學哲學學報》 第五十二期 (2024 年 7 月) 頁 35-61

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# Sketch on Vision and Environmental Consciousness Between Heidegger and Ancient Chinese Painting

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## Abstract

In *Being and Time* Martin Heidegger elucidates our actively engaging with a “surrounding world”. While the issue of an original “disclosure of Being” primarily concerns thinking and theory, Heidegger’s analysis of our “dwelling” next to things, “dealt with” and thus “encountered” by us, exhibits a different orientation. From this starting point, this paper explores how, especially in Heidegger’s later thinking and subsequent phenomeno-

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投稿日期：2023.10.27；接受刊登日期：2024.2.17

責任校對：向富緯、王尚

DOI: 10.30393/TNCUP.202407\_(52).0002

logy, the ancient philosophical paradigm of vision, that means of “intuition”, “representation”, and “looking”, as dominating our access to the world, becomes progressively subverted, or enhanced, by the idea of “dwelling”. On this ground the paper argues that the living relationship to our environment in the mode of “dwelling” should re-become prevalent, within our modern environmental consciousness. Therefore, it is demonstrated to what extent our “dwelling in the world” is inherent in, and intrinsic to, our looking at the world. In order to validate this claim, in the second part the discussion takes advantage of a transcultural approach, briefly consulting ancient Chinese reflections on painting, with respect to the relation between vision and environmental consciousness. This textual evidence proves how and to what extent aesthetic picture contemplation can indeed be understood as a field where our “looking” actively commits, and effectuates, our “dwelling”. Thus it is pleaded in this paper, between Heidegger and pre-modern Chinese aesthetics, that at present we should learn anew how to view things in the world adequately, so as to restore a “dwelling” mode of relating to our surrounding world.

**Keywords: Heidegger, ancient Chinese aesthetics, vision, dwelling, environment**

# Sketch on Vision and Environmental Consciousness Between Heidegger and Ancient Chinese Painting

## I. Environmental Consciousness between Looking and Dwelling

In Martin Heidegger's elucidation of the basic structure of human existence in its relation to the world, Dasein is originally qualified as a peculiar mode of "being-in" (In-Sein) (Heidegger 1996: 49-58; Heidegger 1986: 52-59). It is within this preliminary description that Dasein's life relation to an environment and the issue of "dwelling" (wohnen, innan, habitare) for the first time comes prominently into play (Heidegger 1996: 51; Heidegger 1986: 54). Dasein is not just to be found "somewhere inside the world". Due to its "dwelling" structure Dasein implies an existential relatedness to its environment; it has to be considered as "being with the world" (Sein bei der Welt). That means that Dasein, beyond its mere spatial situatedness inside the world, cannot but *come next to*, and *actively engage in*, a "surrounding world" (Umwelt). Dasein not only "appears" or "comes up" (aufgehen) within a general world horizon but takes part in the shaping of the world itself as this or that particular *environment*. Dasein's "having a world" (Welthaben) is always already rooted in a "dwelling" relationship with Dasein's surrounding world, and a living *environmental consciousness* has to be seen as the necessary ground where any comprehension of the world originates.

According to the well-known analysis Heidegger exposes in the first division of part one of *Being and Time*, concerning the special structure and mode of existence of Dasein, there are various aspects included in Dasein's intimate relationship with the world. "Disclosure" (Erschlossenheit) and "understanding" (Verständnis) of Being, such expressions remain indebted to the traditional framework of a conscious subject's access to an objectified world replete with meaning, by way of sense perception, cognition, and reasoning. Even Heidegger's insisting on "mood" (Stimmung) as the primary and all-encompassing dimension whence the world as world first emerges for Dasein, still more or less echoes the notion of a psychic subject being exposed to a reality which affects its "situatedness and attunement" (Befindlichkeit). However, a major divergence from philosophies of subjectivity occurs where Dasein's opening up towards the world is said to rely on its *being embodied*. It is not only always some particular and concrete surrounding world which stands for the world in general. Furthermore, this surrounding world does not anymore relate to perception and cognition, in the first place; it mainly relies on Dasein's everyday behavior and to its being endowed with hands. The world Dasein dwells in, that means that very basic world horizon which pertains to the "dwelling" mode of being-in, corresponds to some distinctive environment which, first and foremost, delivers particular "things-at-hand" (Zuhandenes) Dasein has to "handle" and to "deal with" (besorgen). Dasein's dwelling next to the world means that Dasein encounters things and others as well as the meaningfulness of its very own existence, by means of, in a *hands-on* way, concerning itself with some practical task. As Dasein through its embodied activity unfolds its everyday existence, its dwelling is brought into an effective proximity or "nearness" (Nähe) with respect to the surrounding world (Heidegger 1996: 95;

Heidegger 1986: 102). Put in other terms, it is due to this *actively involved dwelling* that a close affinity between Dasein and innerworldly things first becomes established, by the way freeing the world from just being a presupposed spatial-temporal framework for human existence or an object of theoretical interpretation.

Originally *Being and Time* has been devoted to an inquiry into the “meaning of Being”, aiming at critically deconstructing metaphysics and philosophical theorizing. For these endeavors are considered to have been oblivious, in a decisive way, of the fundamental dimensions of human existence as exposed to, and belonging to, Being. Yet the progressing exploration of this question, as a matter of fact, soon turns into a clarification of Dasein’s practically engaging with its situational environment. Subsequently Heidegger will elaborate this pragmatic turn in more detail, especially focusing on the purport of the idea of “dwelling”.<sup>1</sup> Here the crucial problem arises of how the traditional configuration of our access to the world through “thinking” (denken), operating by means of concepts and language, may be connected to “dwelling”. Regarding this issue Heidegger demonstrates how philosophical theorizing essentially relies on the paradigm of “vision” (Gesichtssinn, sehen) by which the world becomes objectified, right from the start. Beginning with Greek antiquity and much more intensely since René Descartes, what is designated by the term “world” progressively has become shaped into a “representation” (Vorstellung) of reality and into a comprehensive “world view” (Weltbild).<sup>2</sup> Hence it is obvious that the question of “looking” (schauen)

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<sup>1</sup> „Bauen Wohnen Denken (1951)“/ „...dichterisch wohnet der Mensch...“ (Heidegger 2000: 146-164/ 189-208); „Die Kunst und der Raum“ (Heidegger 2002: 203-210).

<sup>2</sup> „Das Zeitalter des Weltbildes“/ „Hegels Begriff der Erfahrung“ (Heidegger 1950: 69-104/ 105-192); „Die Frage nach der Technik“ (Heidegger 2000: 5-36).

has to be considered as being central for a debate concerning the relation between “thinking the world” and “dwelling in the world”. How does dwelling Dasein actually look at the very world it dwells in? What signification and structure does vision adopt, as seen from the stance of Dasein’s basic dwelling next to and becoming aware of a life environment?

Under the title of “building” (bauen) Heidegger has put emphasis on Dasein’s “spatial” relationship with the world. The issue of “looking”, the issue of embodied vision and sense perception, as it has been addressed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and others thereafter, has not obtained the same systematic attention, on Heidegger’s part. As to how the relation between “looking” and “dwelling” should be conceived of from a Heideggerian perspective, this problem seems still to be pending. Also, this question should be put into focus, in order to understand how our modern dependence on vision, largely extended and heavily consolidated by digital media, is essentially connected with our access to our life environment. It should be investigated how our fixation on the visual sphere may impede or foster our becoming aware of our environment, our “environmental consciousness”, as it were. It may be asked whether our enhanced “looking” at things in the world, at present, by and large should be held responsible for sort of closing and sealing our world in its existential dimensions, or whether nowadays “looking” indeed continues to virtually set free our “dwelling” mode of living next to our environment in a corresponsive and mindful attitude.

After briefly summarizing Heidegger’s general position with respect to “looking” or “intuition” (Anschauung), this paper will outline the possible contribution ancient Chinese reflections on painting may yield to this inquiry. The reason for this transcultural approach is very simple: Pre-

modern Chinese aesthetics has been profoundly reflecting, in peculiar non-European ways, on the relation between contemplating pictures or rather world disclosure as effectuated through paintings, and the beholder's "dwelling" within his or her life environment. This significant difference of perspective makes a consultation of those East Asian experiences very meaningful, as soon as light is shed on them from the stance of Heidegger's thought on vision connected to a "dwelling" relation to our surrounding world. These sketchy reflections ultimately intend to contribute insight into possible new ways of *re-thinking our life environment*, today.

## **II. Relating to the Environment through Vision**

Dasein is not just positioned somewhere inside the world, like other beings, and its existence cannot be reduced to mere "being-before-hand" or "objective presence" (Vorhandenheit) (Heidegger 1996: 39; Heidegger 1986: 42). As Dasein's mode of existing essentially involves an "understanding of Being" (Heidegger 1996: 62-67; Heidegger 1986: 66-72), it consists in a disclosing move towards the world. Due to this "transcendence", intrinsic to Dasein's existence, Dasein reveals the realm of phenomenal things (Heidegger 2007: 211-213, 233-236). Yet this "being toward the world" (Sein zur Welt) (Heidegger 1996: 53; Heidegger 1986: 57) marks a doubled structure, namely Dasein's practical, as well as theoretical, access to things. Dasein not only "deals with" something, it also "gives free" (freigeben) what it deals with. Dasein "lets be" (sein lassen) all things just as they are, and it lets them "be encountered" (begegnen) as what appears (Heidegger 1996: 76-81; Heidegger 1986: 83-86).

Contrary to what philosophies of consciousness usually tend to

presume, in its relation to the world Dasein *must* bodily engage with things, and it *must* have sense perception, so as to disclose what appears. Dasein's being embodied encompasses a twofold structure. First, the world imperatively becomes some concrete environment, next to Dasein and closely correlated with its meaningful behavior. Second, Dasein's "dealing with" something is not limited to merely performing some activity; it involves and is guided by "circumspection" (Umsicht) (Heidegger 1996: 65; Heidegger 1986: 69). The reason for this lies in the fact that Dasein, in its very *existence*, right from the start "has Being itself 'in the eye'" (das Sein selbst 'im Auge' haben) (Heidegger 1987: 138). Thus besides "saying" (sagen) Dasein's "looking" (blicken) at things revealing themselves constitutes the other of the two "originary ways of appearing" (Grundweisen des Erscheinens) (Heidegger 1982: 169). Dasein basically not only has got language, so as to announce Being by means of "saying"; it also is "theoretical" in the etymological sense of the word, that means this mode of existence *essentially actualizes itself* through "viewing" and "sight" (Sicht), by means of "intuition" or even "contemplation" (θεωρία [theoria]), so as to behold the "appearance" (Aussehen) or "aspect" (Anblick) of beings (Heidegger 1982: 153-154, 158, 184, 217). However, it should be noticed that the act of "looking" itself intrinsically has got a complex structure, closely connecting the looking-one to his or her environment.

First, Heidegger emphasizes that "to behold" (erblicken) another person essentially means "to get sight of and look *from*" (er-blicken, that is: her-blicken) someone else who already is looking at you—yet before signifying "to get sight of" or "to grasp with the gaze" (Heidegger 1982: 158). Elsewhere can be found this quite obscure insinuation: "Thinking means: to get sight of the inconspicuous which is sighting-in from the



interstice and joint of its shining”.<sup>3</sup> The reason for this intricate phenomenon is to be sought in the fact that what is captured by the gaze, a thing *as* something appearing, already involves a twofold constitution. What appears to our sight by no means is just some plain object we look at and seize with the eye, the mere “appearance” of what shows itself to us. As soon as our intuition starts, the appearance of the thing looked-at already has grasped our gaze. What appears *acts on* the gaze *to* which it appears. “Aspect”, first of all, means “ad-spect” (An-blick): similar to an “advent” (Ankunft) the appearance of what is looked at *comes towards* the beholder (Heidegger 1982: 153-154, 158; cf. Waldenfels 2004: 223).

Edmund Husserl has demonstrated how it is actually Dasein’s being embodied and being bodily exposed to what comes into sight while looking. This results in a sort of active-passive reversal. An appearance attracts the eye’s attention, yet before perception and looking properly speaking have commenced. What comes into appearance and thus is looked at, first of all, “affects” the *embodied gaze*, grasping it with a certain “enticement” (Anmutung), “affective force” (affektive Kraft), or “appeal” (Anspruch) (Husserl 1966: 42-51). The appearance exerts a sort of “pull” or “tendency” (Zug, Tendenz) on the eye, first “motivating” (motivieren) it to actually have a look. It then directs the gaze further on, while looking (Husserl 1966: 148-149; cf. Waldenfels 2010: 110, 143, 153). This intimate connection between intuition and the gaze’s being embodied reveals itself as the fundamental “kinesthetic motivation” of our entire perceptual access to the world (Husserl 1966: 13; cf. Merleau-Ponty 1945: 114-172). The gaze and the act of looking, as it were, are *responding* to something which

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<sup>3</sup> „Denken heißt: den Einblick des Unscheinbaren aus der Fuge seines Scheinens erblicken.“ (Heidegger 2020: 166)

already has befallen the embodied eye, prior to looking (Mersch 2002: 27, 185). According to Bernhard Waldenfels, generally speaking, intuition, sense perception, and attentive looking, essentially all stand for the “double event” (Doppelereignis) (Waldenfels 2010: 153) of a looking that is being “initiated by the things” (von den Dingen initiiert) (Waldenfels 2010: 143). Or as Georges Didi-Huberman puts it: what we look at is “that which regards us” (ce qui nous regarde)—namely that which *looks at us* and which, at the same time, *concerns us* (Didi-Huberman 1992: 19).

As a second point, following Merleau-Ponty’s detailed investigations into visibility and sense perception it must be emphasized that the intricate structure of the act, or rather “event”, of looking always implies a peculiar *closeness and affiliation* which establishes itself between the beholder and what appears and is looked at, *through the act of looking*. Associated with looking and brought about by the basic affection embodied Dasein suffers from things appearing is a certain proximity, or rather—using Heidegger’s term—“nearness”, to what becomes looked at. Dasein by no means represents such an impartial looker-on as sensualists and cognitivists mostly consider the subject of perception to be. Even though, according to Merleau-Ponty, the gaze only “has at some distance” (avoir à distance) (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 27) what it beholds, it still sort of “possesses” (posséder) what it beholds (Merleau-Ponty 1969: 110). At the same time, a significant reversal occurs: the beholder in turn “is taken possession of” (être possédé), too, by the appearance beheld (Merleau-Ponty 1964b: 178, 199). The reason for this is to be sought, once more, in the beholder’s *being embodied*. It is “through the flesh” (par la chair) that the beholder, right from the start, “is part of” or “partakes of” (en être) what is beheld (Merleau-Ponty 1964b: 178). By the way, according to Emmanuel Levinas the embodied beholder even runs the risk to become “obsessed” (être obsédé) with visibility (Levinas 1978: 96 note 10).

As to sum up what has been uncovered so far it may be claimed that the constitution of the embodied gaze and its looking essentially means that the gaze, right from the start, *belongs to* what appears and becomes looked at. This affinity in no way may be confined to a merely receptive scheme of sensation and sense perception. What is concerned here ought not to become restricted to the causally effective relation between an appearance and its being looked at. What is at stake reaches far beyond such a common sense model of perception. As a matter of fact, embodied vision, as well as the beholder him or herself, altogether “dwell” (*habiter*) (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 9, 27; Merleau-Ponty 1969: 84) inside what appears and becomes looked at. The beholder bodily pertains to and resides at the very site *where* his or her looking takes place.

Since Dasein’s vision and looking imperatively is rooted in its being *bodily exposed to* what is beheld and looked-at, the act of looking effectively brings about the relation to an environment in which things looked-at appear, as soon as they become looked-at. Bodily looking Dasein is to be distinguished from anything such as a subject of consciousness “being in the world” or “opening up towards the world”. Dasein’s *attitude and disposition* crucially differ from these formulations prompted by ontology and epistemology. Just during the act or event of looking, just by means of the embodied gaze, Dasein *already has become* the one who dwells in the world (Janicaud 1998: 109). Essentially existing as the “dwelling-one”, looking Dasein as well *belongs to its environment*. The fundamental relationship with our environment which becomes established through the existential mode Heidegger defines as “dwelling”, reveals itself to be inherent in and intrinsic to our gaze.

Our looking at things encountered in the surrounding world actually

in no way condemns us to any such thing as the objectifying gaze of mere “theory” which would separate us from our life environment by simply yielding some “representation” or “world view”. Our vision itself, as a matter of fact, has got the *pragmatic potential* to restore and enhance our existential constitution of “dwelling in the world”. Our looking is capable of bestowing on us an “environment” in the strong sense of “environment for our dwelling”. At the same time our looking is capable of transforming ourselves into “dwelling-ones”, so as to effectively take us into this very environment. As to the question of how this mutation actually can take place whenever we exert our looking, for instance when we are looking at a landscape, all the more so when we adopt an intense aesthetic attitude while looking at some painted vista, with respect to this issue a transcultural consultation of vision in the field of ancient Chinese aesthetics, albeit in an utterly succinct form, will now prove to be extremely elucidating.

### III. Looking and Dwelling: the Case of Ancient Chinese Aesthetics

Husserlian key phenomena such as “affection”, “enticement”, “appeal”, or “kinesthetic motivation”, markedly feature in ancient Chinese painting theory, and these notions do so in a much more fundamental way than they ever have done in the corresponding European counterpart. Generally speaking, the beholder of an ancient Chinese painting is not primarily supposed to identify the content depicted or to interpret its signification. During aesthetic contemplation the beholder is believed to become more or less profoundly affected in their *existential attitude toward the world*. Especially in the case of mountain water painting (*shān shuǐ huà* 山水畫) which roughly corresponds to European landscape painting, as a

result of the aesthetic experience the beholder undergoes in front of the picture, he or she eventually will become transformed into a “dweller”. From a looker-on who intends to merely “view” the world represented by the painted image, the beholder’s basic *constitution of existence* will mutate into the peculiar mode of “dwelling” amidst the various things an *environment* is composed of.

According to Xie He 謝赫 (active between 479-502), an early theoretician of the pictorial treatment of human figures, supreme artistic achievement foremost consists in “breathing and tune, that means [a] lively moving [configuration]”<sup>4</sup> (Yu 1998: 355). Cosmic *qì*-breathing may permeate a painted picture, enabling it to induce *corresponsive resonances* on part of the beholder’s *qì*-breathing. As a result of aesthetic contemplation the beholder will be made to vividly co-vibrate with the “breathing and tune” which becomes lively enacted by the image. This very basic conviction has been shared by all aestheticians in China throughout pre-modern intellectual history. It is sustained by the antique theory of “affection through breathing” (*qì gǎn* 氣感). The reason why ancient Chinese paintings are considered to be able to release a thoroughgoing *ethical transformation* of the beholder ultimately consists in their vividly “breathing”. Originally the pictorial “breathing and tune” has been imparted onto the picture by mediation of the “breathing” embodied by the painter. In the first instance an utterly subtle, vivid, and sensitive, brushwork proper to ancient Chinese ink wash painting and refined by the practice and art of brush writing, hinges on the painter’s bodily moving his hand. This working technique bequeaths that very affective intensity of

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<sup>4</sup> “Gu hua pin lu 古畫品錄” (Record of the Classification of Ancient Painters): 氣韻生動是也。

“breathing and tune” onto the picture that eventually will trigger a sort of co-vibrating attunement, on the part of the aesthetic contemplator of the image.

In his foundational treatise on mountain water painting<sup>5</sup> Zong Bing 宗炳 (375-443) is the first one who describes a thoroughgoing transformation the just newly born pictorial rendering of natural environments may execute on the entire person of the beholder, by means of pictorial responsiveness. The aesthetic contemplator preliminarily will “dwell at leisure and regulate their breathing” (*xián jū lǐ qì* 閒居理氣) in front of a painting; then “while sitting here they will penetrate the vast wilderness out there, not at all leaving behind the greenery fostered by heaven, just responding to the deserted expanse in solitude”<sup>6</sup> (Yu 1998: 583-584). Zong Bing himself is known for his predilection for this kind of “strolling at random while abiding at ease in one’s place” (*wò yóu* 臥遊). Just by looking at his paintings he somehow muted into a recluse, that means a “dweller” amidst mountains and rivers, in the emphatic sense of the word.

In fact, to leave looking behind and to mutate into a “dwelling-one”, so as to come into a more intimate proximity to the world and all Buddhas in it, such was the original intention of Zong Bing’s painting “mountain and water”. He was not at all aiming at aesthetic landscape contemplation, but at awakening, and a necessary step towards his reunion with the Buddha, for him, seemed to be a *corresponsive* relationship with his surrounding world, as induced by a “dwelling” mode of looking at painted pictures.

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<sup>5</sup> “Hua shan shui xu 畫山水序” (Preface to the Painting of Mountain and Water).

<sup>6</sup> 坐究四荒，不違天勵之藪，獨應無人之野。

When the picture has been made by the painter with “the eye responding and the inner sense joining in” (*yìng mù huì xīn* 應目會心), then the beholder of the image, too, “will respond and join in, and they will be affected in the spiritual flow, passing over [into the real world] by means of the spiritual flow, so as to let the paths [of reality] be obtained”<sup>7</sup> (Yu 1998: 583). The beholder’s “looking”, in front of the painted picture, metamorphoses into the more fundamental existential mode of “passing over” into the world, that means of intimately coming close to and corresponding with a life environment. At this very moment the world the beholder is facing in the picture and relating to, through responsiveness with the image becomes transformed from a mere object at display or some “representation” into the real life world with all its existential connotations, that means the very world the beholder originally belongs to and “dwells” in. Yet crucial for accomplishing such an existential transformation within the beholder is the “responding eye”, that means a committed gaze and a manner of looking that deeply engages with what is looked at.

The ethical power of aesthetics described by Zong Bing concerns the picture contemplator’s basic “being toward the world”. This aesthetic-ethic conversion ought not to be confounded with anything like the beholder’s imaginatively “immersing” (*eintauchen*) in a pictorial vista, as discussed by phenomenology (Wiesing 2005: 107). Zong Bing looking at the painted picture does not just exchange his actual self for some peculiar “pictorial ego” (*Bild-Ich*) (Husserl 1980: [Nr. 16] 467 note 1), corresponding to some “consciousness pertaining to the picture” (*Bildbewusstsein*) (Husserl 1980: [Nr. 1] 82-87), as Husserl would have it, due to his presumptions

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<sup>7</sup> 應會感神，神超理得。

concerning the European theory of pictorial representation. Ancient Chinese mountain water painting hinges on “resonance” (Escande 2003), “agency” (Descola 2021: 17, 23-26, 82-83), or “effectiveness” (Jullien 2003: 179), in place of mimetic or illusionistic “representation”. Therefore, aesthetic picture contemplation is believed to result in sort of effectively establishing a certain environment, including its entire meaningfulness for human existence, around the very person of the beholder of a picture, at the very moment of picture contemplation—instead of merely leading to illusionary “immersion” experienced by the contemplator.

Finally, the famous painter and art theoretician Guo Xi 郭熙 (1023-about 1085) claims that the most achieved works of mountain water painting are not those where the beholder “may travel or get a distant view” (*kě xíng kě wàng* 可行可望), but those quite rare pictures that yield a “place where to ramble and to dwell” (*kě yóu kě jū zhī chù* 可遊、可居之處)<sup>8</sup> (Yu 1998: 632). However, such a “distinguished place” (*jiā chù* 佳處) should not be looked at with “the eye of the blasé connoisseur” (*jiāo chǐ zhī mù* 驕侈之目). The contemplator of such an exquisite painting ought to *engage with* that very place, by means of bringing along “a mental and intentional attitude which corresponds with trees and sources” (*lín quán zhī xīn* 林泉之心), yet before commencing aesthetic picture contemplation (Yu 1998: 632). Prior to looking at an image which evokes or rather enacts a “distinguished place”, the beholder imperatively must be *attuned* to such a place. The “attunement” in the Heideggerian sense the contemplator of a mountain water painting is summoned to contribute on their part, should be that of someone who actually abides amidst “trees and

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<sup>8</sup> “Lin quan gao zhi 林泉高致” (Sublime Mood Between Trees and Sources), section ‘Shan shui xun 山水訓’ (Instructions on Mountain and Water).



sources”, that means of someone who cherishes the real life environment of recluses. According to this statement of Guo Xi’s aesthetic experience encompasses and presupposes that very “situatedness and attunement” the beholder of a painting, as an *existing* person, that means as Dasein, always already embodies, prior to the aesthetic practice. The contemplator’s *behavioral intentions*, regarding the “total relevance” (*Bewandtnisganzheit*) (Heidegger 1996: 78; Heidegger 1986: 84) of a *life environment*, becomes involved in such an intense aesthetic experience, right from the beginning. Therefore, viewing pictures in an aesthetically appropriate manner, such a practice essentially surpasses mere “looking”, as it intimately relates to the viewer’s life situation and “attunement”. It is due to this *existential commitment* that, ultimately, an actual life environment may, as it were, emerge from the act of looking at a picture. Vision leads the way into the surrounding world Dasein pertains to.<sup>9</sup> “Looking” opens up to “dwelling”, by the very enactment of vision.

The significance of this basic stance is elucidated by Guo Xi in an extremely concise and subtle manner. First he concedes that aesthetic contemplation may affect the beholder’s “self-awareness and mood, exceeding the scenery” (*jǐng wài yì* 景外意). Perceiving and recognizing the painted prospect as this or that depicted vista, this act of consciousness may turn into a more fundamental, and more existentially meaningful, mood: “Looking at such a painting makes a corresponding mood arise in you, like when you actually abide amidst these mountains”<sup>10</sup> (Yu 1998: 635). Here the vista at display, the pictorial object looked at in front of the beholder, mutates into a life environment that envelops the looking person

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<sup>9</sup> For a detailed discussion of this interpretation I refer to Obert 2007: 331-363; Obert 2009.

<sup>10</sup> 看此畫令人生此意，如真在此山中。

from all sides, just like when one actually finds oneself at a mountain site. Yet this effect is produced by the beholder's engaging with the picture while looking at it, on the existentially more fundamental level of "being in a mood" (*Gestimmtheit*) (Heidegger 1996: 126; Heidegger 1986: 134). Guo Xi's aesthetic contemplator does not get involved by the image or the depicted place through illusion, imagination, or "immersion". It is rather within the dimension of the beholder's original "situatedness and attunement", that means within the dimension of their original "being in the world", that an actual environment is called upon the scene, by picture contemplation.

It seems as though an "environment" in a more complete sense had come to replace what the contemplator of the picture was originally facing as a mere "pictorial vista". This environmental dimension happens to permeate the beholder's "mood", so as to leave the act of vision behind and to, first and foremost, impregnate the beholder's mode of "being toward the world" in a specific way, namely the way of "abiding amidst mountains". Of course, as has been emphasized earlier, the one who looks at such a painting, right from the start, must be prepared on the level of his or her "mood": the beholder must bring along an *existential desire* for "dwelling" in a mountainous site—not coming as someone who just relishes collecting or looking at pictures. However, actually having a look, looking at the painted image, the act of vision or intuition still remains the necessary precondition, in order to let the picture actually produce its effect on the beholder's "situatedness and attunement". While looking, and *by means of looking*, Guo Xi's picture contemplator becomes freed from mere intuition. This beholder becomes someone who "dwells" amidst a surrounding world. Here the distance inherent in "looking" is able to induce the proximity of "dwelling".

In a further step towards aesthetic-ethic accomplishment, Guo Xi claims that looking at a picture eventually may even lead to *practical consequences*. This is the “sublime effectiveness of painting, still exceeding self-awareness and mood” (*huà zhī yì wài miào* 畫之意外妙). When a picture endows the beholder with a site for living, it actually prompts the person that is looking to adopt a certain *behavioral disposition*. In its dynamic effectiveness and existential purport this disposition even exceeds the former “self-awareness and mood”, that means a more static, and more passive, dimension of “attunement”. By now, “beholding such a painting causes an upheaval of mental state and intentions, on part of the beholder, such as when they actually set out for that very place”<sup>11</sup> (Yu 1998: 635-636). This time looking at the picture stirs the beholder’s *intention to move*. This effect goes beyond just producing a certain state of mind or inducing a certain mood. The effectiveness of the image is such that the beholder *wishes to transfer him or herself to somewhere*. He or she *commences moving* in concordance with the environment disclosed—or rather engaged and enacted—by the image. The perfective expression “like when actually abiding amidst these mountains” in Guo Xi’s former statement, by now, has shifted to a connotation which indicates an event that will occur in the near future: “like when one actually sets out for” (*rú jiāng zhēn jí* 如將真即). The author points to a behavioral disposition preparing the picture contemplator for the arrival at “that place”.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> 看此畫令人起此心，如將真即其處。

<sup>12</sup> Besides, even if the very common hypothetical clause formulation is adopted for *rú rú*, translating “as if/ as though” instead of “like when”, in fact this interpretation, which is obviously biased, due to a fundamental prejudice originating in European theories of mimetic representation and pictorial illusion, does not make much difference, with respect

Will this just be that vista of the painting, the very illusory place depicted and looked at in the image? Does Guo Xi here allude to some location in nature, a site existing prior to and independently of the painter's depicting it? Or does he point to a place only to be found within the beholder's imagination? Yet this "place" (*chù* 處) definitely points at one of those "distinguished places" where one actually "can ramble or dwell", mentioned before. In a first step the beholder was summoned to leave behind an aestheticist connoisseur's eye and to adopt a "mental and intentional attitude corresponding with trees and sources", prior to picture contemplation. By now, such a sincere contemplator should become rewarded by the real effectiveness of aesthetic practice. He or she should actually obtain some place that "corresponds with trees and sources", to wit: the dwelling place of a recluse. This means nothing less than that the author, by now, conceives of an *existential* change to be put into effect, on behalf of the beholder's "being toward the world". The beholder's "being situated and attuned", that means being behaviorally "disposed for", his or her surrounding world, has undergone a profound metamorphosis, by way of looking at the image: due to the beholder's enactment of vision or intuition, he or she has effectively changed from a "looking-one" into a "dwelling-one".

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to the argument. For emphasis is put by Guo Xi on the *pragmatic efficiency* picture contemplation actually exerts on the person of the beholder. From the perspective of phenomenology and aesthetics of reception, the focal point in his double phrasing consists in his claiming that the painted picture "makes arise a corresponding mood" (令人生此意), and that it "causes an upheaval of mental state and intentions" (令人起此心). *Effectively involved* by picture contemplation are the beholder's mood, attunement, behavioral intentions, dispositions and motivations—regardless of the question whether this transformation of the beholder's entire person is based on some real experience the beholder may remember, at the moment of picture contemplation, or just on hypothetical facts, on illusion and imagination.

To conclude this part, according to pre-modern Chinese aesthetics at least the aesthetic experience of viewing mountain water paintings may yield a sort of *ethic-existential conversion*. This conversion restores an original mode of “dwelling-in”, within and through the act of “looking-at”. For “looking”, in fact, may involve the beholder’s entire “being in the world”. What thus springs off from the heart of vision or intuition is a crucial enrichment of the beholder’s environmental consciousness, leading the whole person back into a fundamental disposition of “dwelling”, with respect to his or her surrounding world.

#### **IV. Can We Conciliate Looking and Dwelling?**

When read from a Heideggerian stance ancient Chinese reflections on painting provide an important philosophical insight that exceeds aesthetics and art theory: the effectiveness of a pictorial agency elevates the beholder’s act of looking. It inaugurates an access to the beholder’s life environment and to their life attitude towards this environment, within and through the enactment of vision. When beholding a picture in an aesthetically adequate manner the picture contemplator may eventually be lead into an encounter with his or her surrounding world. While engaging the looking person’s entire “being in the world”, such an encounter still remains rooted within and indebted to vision. The aesthetic experience of “looking” lets the whole person accomplish a profound reversal to and engagement with his or her own life environment, by means of a “dwelling” disposition towards the world. Thus being left behind are all unsatisfactory attempts at encountering *the* world, solely by means of looking *at* it, or thinking *about* a world in general. Vision, intuition, and theory, as being paradigmatic for a *non-situated* mode of thinking which has been very

common in European philosophizing, may be taken back into a genuine *situatedness* of the entire existence, its existential relationship with the world, as soon as “looking” adopts a comprehensive mode which encompasses the looking person’s “attunement”, as well as a “dwelling” manner of relating to the world.

From the stance of ancient Chinese painting, the following may in turn appear as the existential purport of Heideggerian thinking, and as its signification for our globalized present: our looking at the world in fact has got the potential to make us re-become the “dwelling-ones” who “save” (*schonen*) (Heidegger 2018: 256) *our* world by actually *abiding in* and *engaging with* our environment, instead of relentlessly objectifying and manipulating *the* world from some imaginary vantage point outside our actual site. There is no need to blame or outright condemn vision and especially the contemporary fixation on the visual. Our preserving *our* world, based on our “dwelling in the world”, may indeed, now as ever before, originate in our activity of looking—if only we recover *an existentially committed way* of looking.

If we get involved in our world through looking, will our “dwelling” not become more than just one fundamental mode of our “being in the world”? Our present-day environment may seem to have become an utterly “uncanny” (*unheimlich*) place, more than it ever has been up to now. A great part of this contemporary uneasiness in and with the world, and our anxiety about losing our world or getting lost in it, may actually be caused by our customary ways of viewing the world. Our usual world views, as well as our modern practices of enacting vision, our agile smart phone gaze, may have contributed considerably to alienate us from our surrounding world. But does our vision, in some way or another, not still retain some

remembrance about our “dwelling” amidst things looked at? Isn’t “dwelling” amidst and together with the very environment we “are being thrown” (geworfen) into, the first and most essential feature of our relating to the world? As it seems, “wohnen” not only should precede “bauen” and “denken”, it even comes prior to “schauen”. Yet there are, maybe, some such artistic practices and aesthetic experiences as possibly may remind us of a “dwelling” way of looking, and of engaging with our life environment.

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# 初談介於海德格與中國古代 繪畫之間的視覺與周遭意識

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## 摘要

在《存有與時間》中海德格闡明人的存在如何投入「周圍世界」。「存有之開顯」這則議題涉及思維與理論，但海德格有關「棲居」在透過「操勞」而「照面」之萬物之近處所展開的探討則標誌著另類的導向。本文以此為出發點來探索，在海德格後期思想及現象學來看，支配著人通往世界的視覺典範，即「直觀」、「觀念」、「觀看」如何逐漸被「棲居」這一理念所顛覆或彌補。本文主張的是，當今我們應當重新在「棲居」上奠定與生活周遭的關係。因此，本文證成「棲居於世界中」到何種程度是內在於我們對世界的直觀。為了加強此論點，本文第二個部分是藉由跨文化式取徑，來參照中國古代畫論有關視覺與周遭意識之關係的啟發，藉以印證如何並且在何種程度上觀畫這種美學工夫確實將「觀看」與「棲居」稠密地糾纏起來。依據海德格與前現代中國畫論本文主張：如今我們應當重新學習以更為適當的方式觀看萬物，進而與我們的周圍世界恢復以「棲居」為主軸的關係。

**關鍵詞：**海德格、中國古代美學、視覺、棲居、周遭

