

Landscape and the overcoming of modernity

- Zong Bing's principle -

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1. Landscape is not a universal object

Landscape is a central concept in geography, so central indeed that not a few geographers, remarkably so in the first half of the XXth century, have considered it as geography's first and proper object¹. This tendency was more strongly affirmed in the German than in other schools of geography. There is no simple equivalent to *Landschaftskunde* in French or in English. Though Max. Sorre, in 1913, stated explicitly in the first pages of his doctoral thesis that the essence of geography is in the analysis of landscape², an idea which influenced profoundly the image of geography in neighbouring disciplines like history³, there appeared nothing in French comparable to, for instance, Siegfried Passarge's *Grundlagen der Landschaftskunde* (1919-1920). It is also in German that new notions like *Landschaftsökologie* or even *Landschaftshaushalt* were elaborated. Indeed, *Landschaftsökologie* (coined by Carl Troll in 1938, and published in 1939) was later translated in French with *écologie du paysage*, and as is well known, the notion of landscape ecology, in the wake of biogeography, is representative of an important trend of research linking geography and ecology⁴. An expression like 'landscape ecology' is a direct equivalent of *Landschaftsökologie*, the meaning of which is quite clear. Such is not the case with *Landschaftshaushalt*, though Carl Troll advocated this notion at the same time and on the same grounds, those of *Landschaftskunde*⁵. It was translated with *économie du paysage* in French⁶, but such an equivalence is problematical, because *Landschaftshaushalt* implies in fact not only the academic tradition of *Landschaftskunde*, which can be said to be specifically German, but also, more generally, a cultural attitude which developed in Germany in the thirties⁷ and which makes the proper grounds of the very idea of *Landschaftshaushalt*. *Haushalt* (housekeeping) implies that someone – an individual or collective subject - is caring for a given landscape, or landscape in general. A relation of that kind differs essentially from what is implied in *Landschaftsökologie*, which requires nothing else than an objective and quantified observation of the visible aspects of an ecosystem, and in that sense can be abstracted – at least theoretically – from any subjecthood at all.

The above distinction seems relatively simple⁸. It amounts to saying that landscape ecology is a natural science, whereas landscape maintenance requires also an approach in terms of social sciences. Yet, both have in common *landscape*, and the problem lies in that very notion. In German, the word *Landschaft* is relatively ancient⁹, but for a long time it did not mean landscape in the present sense. In written forms, it was first recorded in the VIIth c., as an equivalent for the Latin word *regio*, or *patria*, *provincia*. In middle High German, this included the meaning of inhabitants. These were still more or less the acceptations of the word at the end of the XVIth c., where the recorded Latin equivalents of *Landschaft* were *regio*, *eparchia*, *terra*, *tractus*, *continens*, and *provincia*. But toward the beginning of the same XVIth c., a new meaning of *Landschaft* is recorded in dictionaries : namely a picture representing that which we now call landscape. Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), for one, used the word in that sense in many of his writings, e.g. when speaking of *der gute Landschaftsmaler* (the good landscape painter) Joachim Patinir¹⁰.

This case illustrates that in Europe, the notion of landscape in its present meaning appeared in the Renaissance¹¹, through the work of painters. This is clearly a historical and cultural phenomenon, not a natural

¹ See Philippe and Geneviève PINCHEMEL (1988) *La Face de la Terre*, Paris : Armand Colin, p. 374 sqq.

² « Nous dirions volontiers que toute la géographie est dans l'analyse des paysages ». Max. SORRE (1913) *Les Pyrénées méditerranéennes, étude de géographie biologique*, Paris : Armand Colin, p. 10. Quoted in PINCHEMEL, p. 374.

³ Lucien FEBVRE for example wrote in 1922 in *La Terre et l'évolution humaine* (re-ed. 1970, Paris : Albin Michel, p. 393) – one of the most influential books of the French school of geography, though Febvre was a historian – that geographers are « analysts of landscape, who, about human societies, have only to study, so to say, the 'landscapal' » (« Les géographes, ces analystes du paysage et qui des sociétés humaines n'ont à étudier, si l'on peut dire, que le 'paysagique' »). Quoted in PINCHEMEL, p. 375.

⁴ See Gabriel ROUGERIE and Nicolas BEROUTCHACHVILI (1991) *Géosystèmes et paysages. Bilan et méthodes*, Paris : Armand Colin.

⁵ See Carl TROLL (1966), *Landschaftsökologie als geographisch-synoptische Naturbetrachtung* (1963) in *Ökologische Landschaftsforschung und vergleichende Gebirgsforsch.*, Wiesbaden, p. 7. Thanks to Helena Junod for this reference.

⁶ E.g. in PINCHEMEL, p. 374. *Économie* is here misleading, because it refers to the etymology (*oikos* : *Haus* : *house*) rather than to the ordinary meaning of the word (*Wirtschaft* : *economy*).

⁷ On this attitude, see Simon SCHAMA (1995) *Landscape and Memory*, New York : Alfred A. Knopf, esp. chapter 2.

⁸ In fact, it implies an ontological distinction, which WATSUJI Tetsurô was the first to make in *Fûdo* (1935), between environment (*kankyô*) and milieu (*fûdo*). On this question, see note 44 and Appendix.

⁹ The following considerations refer to Catherine FRANCESCHI 'Du mot *paysage* et de ses équivalents dans cinq langues européennes', in Michel COLLOT (1997, ed.) *Les Enjeux du paysage*, Brussels : Ousia, 75-111.

¹⁰ FRANCESCHI, p. 84.

¹¹ Grossly speaking, Germanic languages added a new acceptation to an existing word, whereas Latin languages coined a new word by adding a suffix to an existing one (e.g. *-age* to *pays* in French, whence *paysage*). It is not indifferent that in the first case, the notion of landscape meant first the land, then the image of the land, whereas it was the reverse in the second case.

one. In other words, landscape is not a universal object. Its existence requires that of a certain society, with a certain way of looking at its environment and representing it. Using that notion indiscriminately, as if any society, at any epoch, looked at its environment in terms of landscape, is either ethnocentric or anachronistic. We have to be more considerate when using the word 'landscape'.

2. Landscape is not limited to the visible

The above considerations entail that, when dealing with landscape, we have to distinguish clearly two possible attitudes. One is that of the natural sciences, for which landscape studies are a morphology of the environment. The main requirement here is to measure the form of things in that environment, because such measurements can give important informations on the spatial system one is studying (e.g. an ecosystem). This attitude can be, to some degree, extended to human geography. However, in this domain, abstracting the forms from the meaning they have quickly leads to a deadlock. Studying a human settlement is not the same as studying a coral reef, because people inhabit the Earth differently according to their culture, and though these differences appear in the landscape, their reasons are not visible. One has to understand why a given society interprets its environment in such or such a way, which leads it to create such or such forms of settlement. This requires more than measuring the forms of the landscape, and even more than a functional analysis. It requires to study the meaning which human societies give to their environment. For example, it requires to understand why the Europeans, in the Renaissance, had to invent the notion of landscape in order to convey such a meaning, whereas in the Middle Ages, they did not need it¹².

Now, interpreting meaning is a hermeneutical question. In such a field, the origin of which was the interpretation of Scripture, words are extremely important ; and this is why we have to consider carefully, in the present case, the history of the word 'landscape'. However, meaning is far from being only a problem of words. Biosemiotics have shown that, in fact, meaning is coextensive to life, through all sorts of manifestations¹³. In the case of human societies, along with such manifestations (which can be studied with the methods of the natural sciences, e.g. ethology), it is conveyed through symbolic systems, which require specific methods since their functions exceed their physical vectors and thus the laws of nature as far as we know them. For instance, when astronomers discuss about the Sun, the meaning of that referent is conveyed instantly, though the reference would physically take at least sixteen minutes at light speed. This is the principle of representation, which amounts to the presence of something which is not there, though its existence is necessary to the meaning of the sign which represents it.

In the case of landscape, many symbolic systems are involved, and one has to analyse them in order to understand what this referent means. For example, one should analyse what kind of words, in a given society, can represent the environment, as the word 'landscape' and its equivalents can do in European languages since the Renaissance. This is not an easy task, because such words are embedded in a particular worldview, and no worldview can be reduced to another one. It has to be interpreted in its own logic, through hermeneutic means.

The fact is that, in very many worldviews, there exists or existed no equivalent of 'landscape'. Other notions were or are present instead, of which modern European languages do not have equivalents. For instance, though the local word *Tjukurrpa*, in the Australian Western Desert¹⁴, was translated with *Dreaming*, or initially *Dream Time*, such a translation conveys only part of the notion of *Tjukurrpa*, which, among its other meanings, can represent what is called landscape in English. Yet, if *Tjukurrpa* can mean 'landscape' in certain cases, this is definitely not in the way this word is understood by Australians of Anglo-Saxon descent. What a Kukatja perceives in his environment is not what a white Aussie perceives there, though both have the same basic optical capacities as any other *Homo sapiens*. Yet there is nothing supernatural here. We can have an idea of what the Kukatja perceive by analysing their symbolic systems, e.g. their paintings¹⁵.

Such analyses immediately reveal that human perception is never limited to the biophysical data of the environment. The human brain necessarily interprets these data in a way which, though possessing an animal ground which is proper to the human species and distinguishes it from other species, cannot be dissociated from culture. The animal grounds of environmental perception include, for example, the fact that humans perceive more colors than cows ; and the cultural elaboration of these grounds make that, for example, 'green' traffic lights, in Japan', are closer to blue than to green, and are actually called *ao*, like the sky, not *midori*, like vegetation. This has something to do with the fact that *ao*, which is the color of atmospheric perspective (e.g. that of distant mountains), can include the meaning of 'green', whereas it is not an equivalent of green¹⁶.

¹² On the meaning of environment in mediaeval Europe, see Paul ZUMTHOR (1993) *La Mesure du monde. Représentations de l'espace au Moyen Âge*, Paris : Seuil.

¹³ See Jesper HOFFMEYER (1996) *Signs of Meaning in the Universe*, Bloomington and Indianapolis : Indiana University Press.

¹⁴ See Sylvie POIRIER (1996) *Les jardins du nomade. Cosmologie, territoire et personne dans le désert occidental australien*, Münster : LIT Verlag.

¹⁵ On Aboriginal paintings, see Geoffrey BARDON (1991) *Papunya Tula : Art of the Western Desert*, Ringwood : McPhee Gribble.

¹⁶ Augustin BERQUE (1995) *Les Raisons du paysage. De la Chine antique aux environnements de synthèse*, Paris : Hazan, p. 27.

This implies that symbolic systems, like words, have a certain influence on perception¹⁷. This leads us again to the domain and methods of natural (here cognitive) sciences. Yet what concerns us here is rather the reverse: the fact that perception is the ground of symbolic interpretations which develop themselves into semantic systems, such as myths, the logic of which exceed by far what is generally understood by the word 'perception'. In that sense, the meaning of landscape goes far beyond what can be seen in the environment; and this is simply because human beings necessarily interpret, in ways which are specific to a given culture, what is reality for them. For example, *Tjukurrpa* is reality for a Kukatja, but for a modern white Australian, reality is something else.

In other words, landscape exceeds the visible. This principle was in fact acknowledged from the very beginning of the existence of this notion, in Southern China under the Six Dynasties. Zong Bing (375-443), the author of the first treatise on landscape painting in human history, the *Hua shanshui xu*, wrote in the first few lines that « As for landscape, though possessing a visible substance, it tends to the spiritual (*zhi yu shanshui, zhi you er qu ling*¹⁸) ». I would like that this sentence, which I call « Zong Bing's principle », be taught in schools of geography around the world.

3. The five criteria of the existence of landscape

Zong Bing was a painter, of whom it is said that he was so fond of landscapes that he often forgot to come back home¹⁹. He retired to Mount Lu in Jiangxi and to Mount Heng in Hunan, which are famous – along with religious reasons – for the beauty of their views. When he became old and crippled, he painted on the walls of his room the *mingshan* ('mountains with a name', i.e. celebrated as landscapes) which he had liked during his active years.

It is interesting to compare this attitude with that of one of Zong Bing's contemporaries, yet on the other side of the Old World, saint Augustine (354-430), who, in a famous passage of his *Confessions*, wrote the following:

And people go admiring (*et eunt homines mirari*) the crests of mountains, the huge waves of the sea, the large course of rivers, the curved beaches of oceans, the revolutions of stars, and they neglect themselves (*et reliquunt se ipsos*)²⁰.

This passage has a decisive importance in the history of European thought. Augustine says here that, instead of admiring natural sceneries, people should consider what is inside themselves. There, inside what he calls *memoria* and which we now call conscience, dwells God: *manes in memoria mea, Domine* (X, 25, 36: You reside in my conscience, Lord). Yet Augustine himself did not discover this until his conversion: *intus eras et ego foris* (X, 27, 38: You were inside and I was outside).

In this conversion from looking outwards, at the beauties of this world, to looking inwards, at the higher beauties of conscience, lies the main reason why the Christian world did not discover landscape until the Renaissance. As Augustine's very words show, the Romans were prone to admire natural sceneries. We have ample evidence of this in many respects. Yet, they did not reach the stage of being conscious of landscape as such. They had no words to express this notion, all the more reason for them not to have written treatises about it, like Zong Bing's²¹. What they called for example *amoenitas loci* is 'the charm of the place', and cannot be translated with 'the beauty of landscape'; and what Vitruvius (*De Architectura*, VII, 5, 2) writes about the *topia* of a fresco²², designates pictorial motifs, analogous to garden motifs (*topia* or *topiaria opera*), not landscape as such, which in fact lies somewhere inbetween *amoenitas loci* and representations like *topia*. But in Roman minds, this 'inbetween' remained a blank.

This was not the case in China. I personally see the birth certificate of landscape in a poem by Xie Lingyun (385-433), *From Jinzhujian up hill and down dale*, toward the end of which one can read the following three verses²³:

Qing yong shang wei mei

Feeling, using taste, makes beauty

¹⁷ On this question, see for instance Francisco VARELA *et al.* (1993) *L'Inscription corporelle de l'esprit. Sciences cognitives et expérience humaine*, Paris: Seuil.

¹⁸ Quoted in OMURO Mikio (1985) *Enrin toshi. Chûsei Chûgoku no sekaizô*, Tokyo: Sanseido, p. 515.

¹⁹ See OMURO, p. 469 *sqq.*

²⁰ SAINT AUGUSTIN, *Confessions*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994 and 1996, X, 8, 15.

²¹ For a more detailed argumentation of these views, see Augustin BERQUE (1997) 'En el origen del paisaje', *Revista de Occidente*, 189, 7-21. When trying to express the beauty of what we call landscape, the Romans – who had the sense of it – could only use very general terms, like *forma* (form); e.g. Pliny Jr in a letter (*Ep.* V, 6, 7) where he says *Regionis forma pulcherrima* (The country is beautiful). Thanks to John Dixon Hunt and to Helena Junod for this reference. As *forma* is *shape* (related with the *scape* of landscape), a Latin equivalent of landscape might have been something like *regiforma*; but no such word appeared!

²² On Hellenistic and Roman paintings, which contain many instances of what we call 'landscape', see Agnès ROUVERET (1989) *Histoire et imaginaire de la peinture ancienne*, Rome: École française de Rome.

²³ Quoted in OMURO, p. 533.

Shi mo jing shei bian
Guan ci yi wu lü

A thing obscure if you would actually say it
Viewing this is to forget material concerns

which is to state that landscape is not the environment itself, but a certain aesthetic relationship with it. Actually, the birth of landscape as such is the birth of that kind of relationship. This happened among Chinese poets of the Six Dynasties :

The great permutation of attitudes that occurred in the fourth century A.D. and that allowed for the flowering of true landscape poetry was that the poets of that time described the mountains as places good in themselves ; nature then became a thing to be appreciated in itself (...) ²⁴ .

Such an attitude is exactly the contrary of saint Augustine's. Indeed, it is not just an affair of aesthetics. It supposes a whole worldview, and in particular moral and religious reasons. This context was made possible by the collapse of the Han empire and the disfavour of the Confucian ideology which had sustained it. Instead, Taoism, which exalted nature (*ziran*), came to the fore ²⁵. Retreating to the country and to the mountains became a widely spread attitude among cultivated elites ²⁶. There, away from the mundane troubles of the city, one could experience the true sense of things (i.e. Tao) in the landscape, like a famous poem by Tao Yuanming (365-427), *Drinking wine 5* ²⁷, says in its last four verses :

Shan qi ri xi jia
Fei niao xiang yu huan
Ci zhong you zhen yi
Yu bian yi wang yan

Mist on the mount is superb in the setting sun
Birds are flying back home together
In this is true meaning
I would speak but have forgotten language

And this is how the notion of landscape (*shanshui*) appeared in human minds. For sure, this is not a question of physics nor even of biophysics, as the environment has always been there to be seen by any human eye, except blindness, night or fog. My point is that landscape is not the environment, but a certain relation with it. The question is thus to determine whether such a relation exists or not. Saying that it does supposes the fulfilment of the following five criteria, ranking from the most to the least determining, which I have adopted on empirical grounds ²⁸ :

1. The existence of treatises on landscape.
2. The existence one or more words for saying 'landscape'.
3. The existence of pictural representations of landscape ²⁹.
4. The existence of pleasure gardens.
5. The existence of literary (oral or written) appreciations of the environment.

On such grounds, we can consider that landscape was born in China, then rediscovered by the Europeans, and that from thereon, it gradually spread to the rest of the world. But one should never forget that there were or still are *as many possible relations with the environment, other than landscape, as there were or are human cultures*.

4. Then what is reality?

As landscape is real, the above proposition poses directly the question of what is reality. In Europe, since Plato (428-348 BC), the real has been distinguished from sensible phenomena. Between the two, there is a gap (*chôrismos*). Plato exposes this onto-cosmology most clearly in the *Timaios*, where it is said that « there is absolute Being, place, and relative being, the three of which exist in three different sorts, and which were born before the sky » (*on te kai chôran te kai genesin einai, tria trichê, kai prin ouranon genesthai*, 52d). Relative being is called *genesis*, « birth », which means that it appears, changes and dies, whereas *on* is eternal. *Genesis* is only an image (*eikôn*) of *on*, and it needs a place (*chôra*) for existing, whereas *on* transcends space and time. This necessary relationship of *chôra* and *genesis* is what constitutes the sensible world, *kosmos*, which itself is

²⁴ Donald HOLZMAN (1996) *Landscape Appreciation in Ancient and Early Medieval China*, Hsin-chu (Taiwan) : National Tsing Hua University, p. 48.

²⁵ See MIYAKAWA Hisayuki (1964) *Rikuchô-shi kenkyû*, II : *Shûkyô hen*, Tokyo : Heirakuji Shoten ; and MURAKAMI Yoshimi (1974) *Rikuchô shisô-shi kenkyû*, Kyôto : Heirakuji Shoten.

²⁶ See OBI Kôichi (1988) *Chûgoku no inton shisô*, Tokyo : Chuokoronsha ; and KAGURAOKA Masatoshi (1993) *Chûgoku ni okeru in'itsu shisô*, Tokyo : Pelikansha.

²⁷ Edited by MATSUE Shigeo and WADA Takeshi (1990), *Tô Enmei zenshû*, vol. 2, Tokyo : Iwanami Bunko, p. 208-209.

²⁸ I started using criteria 2 to 5 in 1990, but later have added criterion 1, the most undisputable of all. See Augustin BERQUE (ed., 1994) *Cinq propositions pour une théorie du paysage*, Seyssel : Champ Vallon ; and (*Id.*, ed., 1999) *La Mouvance. Du jardin au territoire, cinquante mots pour le paysage*, Paris : Éditions de la Villette.

²⁹ This differs from representing elements of the environment, e.g. an animal or a tree, like the ancient Greeks did on their ceramics. Landscape must have a visible ground linking its elements. *Topiaria opera* represent the stage when such a link is established, but the word *topia* is a plural, which means that the entity of landscape is still not clearly taken in its unity. This needs a *concept* (from the latin *cum-capio* : take together).

only an image of True Being, *ontôs on*, i.e. the Real, which is invisible and can be grasped only through *logos*. As the last sentence (92c) of the *Timaios* says :

Having taken in itself all the mortal and immortal livings, and being in that way entirely filled, the world (*kosmos*), visible living containing all the visible livings, sensible god made in the image of the Intelligible (*eikôn tou noêtou theos aisthêtos*), is born (...),

while it is stated, earlier, that true knowledge concerns Being, whereas sensible phenomena are only an affair of belief (*hotiper pros genesin ousia, touto pros pistin alêtheia*, 29c).

This metaphysical distinction between sensible phenomena and what is the Real, added to the idea that there are measurable proportions (*summetrias*) between things, is the remote origin of modern science ; which, for what concerns us here, was illustrated by Newton's *Opticks* (1704). Since then, it became impossible to confuse the appearance of things with what they are in fact³⁰. To be sure, the Platonic faith that the Real itself could be grasped through *logos* has been tempered by quantic physics, which, for example, has made Bernard d'Espagnat distinguish *reality*, which we can know, and *the real*, which necessarily remains veiled (*réel voilé*), because the very fact of grasping it, be it with the most objective methods, reduces it to the terms in which we can grasp it³¹. In the same way, Ludwig Wittgenstein, in his *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (3.221), has shown that we can only say *how* things are, not *what* they are³². Yet, as physicists like Eugene Wigner or mathematicians like Roger Penrose have insisted on, *logos* (here the use of mathematics in physics) is « extravagantly » close to what the real laws of matter appear to be³³. This means that there exists a certain correspondence between thought and the structure of the universe ; which has led Penrose to postulate the existence of a « Platonic » world (i.e. Plato's « True Being »), linking mysteriously the mental and physical ones³⁴.

Different though these theses may be, along with their fields and methods, they all amount to saying that *reality is that which we grasp, while the real remains metaphysical*.

5. The logic of landscape

Such a distinction has a long history in European thought, as it can be traced up to the stress which Parmenidês (544-450 BC) had put on Being. By conceiving of God as an absolute Being, the three monotheisms of the Book have made such a stress even more determining. Now, on the other side of the Old World, on the contrary, the stress was put on Non-Being ; and correlatively, the metaphysical distinction between an absolute Being and the relative beings of the sensible world was not conceived of, or was denied. For example, it is said in the *Xi ci* (Great Commentary) of the Book of Changes (*Yi-jing*) that « That which is upstream of formation is called the Way, that which is downstream of formation is called the Vessel³⁵ (*Xing er shangzhe wei zhi Dao, xing er xiazhe wei zhi Qi*, A 11-12) ». The word *xing* means here the process of actualization of what exists³⁶, but more generally it is that visible or substantial form which, in the Chinese conception of environment, sets but does not limit the landscape. This form of the landscape is only its vessel, and we must consider what is upstream of that vessel : the phenomenal process of coming out into existence, from the mysterious depths of that which the Taoists called 'the Obscure Female' (*Xuan Pin*, *Laozi* : VI) and also 'the Spirit of the Valley' (*Yu Shen*, *ibid.*), hidden there upstream.

These images are very close to what the *Timaios* says of the *chôra* as 'the nurse of existence' (*genesêôs tithênê*, 52d). Yet, in Chinese thought, there is nothing like Plato's *chôrismos* – that 'gap' between the sensible world and Being. As is expressed by the conjunction *er* in the above quotation of the Book of Changes, there is a continuity, though a difference, between what is upstream of formation (*xing er shangzhe*) and what is

³⁰ See Martin KEMP (1990) *The Science of Art : Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press.

³¹ Bernard d'ESPAGNAT (1994) *Le Réel voilé. Analyse des concepts quantiques*, Paris : Fayard.

³² « Die Gegenstände kann ich nur *nennen*. Zeichen vertreten sie. Ich kann nur *von* Ihnen sprechen. *Sie aussprechen kann ich nicht*. Ein Satz kann nur sagen wie ein Ding ist, nicht was es ist » (I can only *name* objects. Signs represent them. I can only speak *about* them, not *pronounce* them. A sentence can only say how a thing is, not what it is) ». Quoted in André CORET (1997) *L'A-préhension du réel. La physique en questions*, Amsterdam, OPA Éditions des archives contemporaines, p. 137. Italics in the quotation.

³³ In Newtonian cosmology, the degree of coincidence of mathematical calculation and observational facts was already about 1/10 000 000. In our present Einsteinian cosmology, it is about 1/10¹².

³⁴ See Roger PENROSE (1995 in the French translation) *Les Ombres de l'esprit. À la recherche d'une science de la conscience*, Paris : Interéditions.

³⁵ It is interesting to compare this expression with Aristotle's definition of place (*topos*) as an 'unmovable vessel' (*aggeion ametakinêton*, *Physics*, IV, 212a) and a 'limit of the envelope' (*to tou periechontos peras*, *ibid.*) of the thing. This definition is consistent with Aristotle's logic of the identity of the subject (see below) : saying that 'A is not non-A' amounts to saying that the identity of the thing does not exceed its *topos*, because if it did, it would be moving to another *topos*, since *topos* is unmovable. In other words, the thing can be ontologically distinguished from its *topos*, whereas, for Plato, it participates in its *chôra*. This amounts to Heidegger's distinction, in *Sein und Zeit*, between *Stelle* and *Platz* (and *Ort* in later writings). As for what concerns us here, landscape cannot be reduced to a problem of measurable *topos* ; it necessarily is also a question of *chôra*, which means that it exceeds Aristotelian logic (see below).

³⁶ As stressed by François JULLIEN (1993) *Figures de l'immanence. Pour une lecture philosophique du Yi-king*, Paris : Grasset.

downstream (*xing er xiazhe*). Being cannot be absolute³⁷, and correlatively there cannot be metaphysics in the European sense. It is quite an ironical turn of history that, in the XIXth c., the German *Metaphysik* was translated into Japanese³⁸ with *keijijōgaku* (later introduced in Chinese as *xingershangxue*), that is ‘the study of what is upstream of formation’, by borrowing from the Book of Changes an expression which denies the very idea of *chōrismos*!

Now, metaphysics being the remote origin of modern science and consequently of the modern view of the world, it became an important question in Japanese thought after the Meiji restoration. The most remarkable result of these interrogations was the idea, embodied by the Kyoto philosophical school (*Kyōto gakuha*) between the two world wars, that there should be an ‘overcoming of modernity’ (*kindai no chōkoku*) by substituting to European metaphysics a radically different one, founded on absolute Non-Being (*zettai mu*) instead of Being. This was illustrated by Nishida Kitarō’s ‘logic of place’ (*basho no ronri*)³⁹, which was centered on the predicate instead of the subject as in Aristotelian logic. Indeed, for Aristotle, the subject (*hupokeimenon*) is a being or a substance (*ousia*), and consequently the predicate – what is said about the subject – does not really exist⁴⁰. Nishida assimilated the predicate to a place (*basho*) subsuming Being, and this place to Non-Being. He also assimilated it to the world (*sekai*), which indeed is nothing else than the way we grasp or predicate the things. This led him to absolutize the world, since the predicate is, ultimately, absolute Non-Being.

This position is exactly the reverse of that of Plato. Now, absolutizing worldhood (*sekaisei*) led Nishida, quite logically though inconsciously, to absolutizing that world he was belonging to, i.e. the predominant nationalistic Japanese worldview of his time⁴¹, by assimilating the imperial regime to an absolute *basho*, able as such to subsume all the nations of the world (since Non-Being subsumes any Being). This was nothing else than giving a metaphysical foundation to the nationalistic slogan *hakkō ichiu* (‘eight corners, one roof’). This extravagant thesis, which the specialists of Nishida’s philosophy generally consider as a circumstantial error, only adventitious to his doctrine, is in fact totally consistent with it. Indeed, the logic of place leads to what Nishida himself writes : an illimitation of the predicate (*jutsugomen ga mugendai to naru*, vol. IV : 288). In other words, to the loss of any referent other than one’s subjectiveness : « the place itself becomes true Non-Being, and what is there becomes a mere intuition of itself (*kore ni oite aru mono wa tan ni jiko jishin wo chokkan suru mono to naru*, *ibid.*).

In historical terms, this illimitation of the predicate – that is, of one’s own world – was exactly what happened to Japanese nationalism in the thirties. In logical terms, it amounts to the contrary of Gödel’s theorems of incompleteness and undecidability, which – at about the same time – showed that the consistency of any system cannot be proven from the inside of that system. These two perspectives give ample evidence that Nishida was wrong in absolutizing *basho*. Yet, his irreplaceable legacy is that he has clearly shown, both voluntarily and unconsciously, what is the nature of worldhood, or of what is called placeness in contemporary geography.

Nishida’s logic of place, by showing that the world is a predicate, also gives us a clue for understanding one of Heidegger’s most recondite formulations, concerning the relationship of world and earth, in *The Origin of the work of art* :

The work liberates the earth in order that it be an earth. (...) The earth is by essence that which closes into itself. Making the earth come out means : to make it come in the open as that which closes into itself. (...) World and earth are essentially different from each other, and yet never separate. The world is founded on the earth, and the earth arises through the world⁴².

It seems to me that this expresses the relationship of the predicate (i.e. the manner in which we grasp things by dint our words, thoughts, feelings and actions) and the proper substance of things, which is hidden by the very fact of being grasped (i.e. predicated into our world). In this sense, it can be assimilated to the subject. Contrary to Nishida, Heidegger poses here that the earth, i.e. the subject which our human predicates transform into our world, can never be totally subsumed into it. Whereas Nishida posed that the world is without base (*mukitei*), the

³⁷ This was the main reason why the mandarins, refusing to conceive of God as an absolute Being, rejected christianism, as shown by Jacques GERNET (1983), *Chine et christianisme*, Paris : Gallimard.

³⁸ By INOUE Tetsujirō, who was teaching at the Imperial University of Tokyo, and strived to introduce European philosophy in Japan.

³⁹ See NISHIDA Kitarō (1927) *Basho* and (1945) *Bashoteki ronri to shūkyōteki seikaikan* in Nishida’s complete works *Nishida Kitarō Zenshū*, Tokyo : Iwanami, 1966, vol. IV and XI.

⁴⁰ On this point see Robert BLANCHÉ and Jacques DUBUCS (1996) *La Logique et son histoire*, Paris : Armand Colin, p. 35 sq.

⁴¹ About the links or absence of links of Nishida’s philosophy with nationalism, in Western languages, see James W. HEISIG and John C. MARALDO (eds., 1994) *Rude Awakenings : Zen, the Kyoto School and the Question of Nationalism*, Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press ; Pierre LAVELLE (1994) ‘Nishida, l’École de Kyōto et l’ultranationalisme’, *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, XCII, 4 ; Augustin BERQUE and Philippe NYS (eds., 1997) *Logique du lieu et œuvre humaine*, Brussels : Ousia ; Augustin BERQUE (ed., 2000) *Logique du lieu et dépassement de la modernité*, Brussels : Ousia, 2 vol.

⁴² Martin HEIDEGGER (1962 in the French translation) *Chemins qui ne mènent nulle part*, Paris : Gallimard, p. 50-51 and 52 (Heidegger’s italics).

earth, for Heidegger, remains the base which necessarily founds the world. Yet, no less necessarily, the earth must be predicated in order to exist for us as our world. That is, as reality.

This gives us the clue of the nature of landscape. Landscape is not the earth itself, as was posed by the modern scientific view. It necessarily supposes human predication, and in this sense, distinguishing 'natural' and 'cultural' landscapes is absurd. There is nothing like 'natural landscapes', because, were it only by the fact of perceiving it, we necessarily predicate the earth into a human world. Ignoring this – i.e. reducing reality to the real – leads to the inhuman absurdity of a world without human existence. This is the deadlock of the modern paradigm, which we have to overcome. On the other hand, landscape cannot be reduced to a merely cultural construction, or a pure predicate, because it necessarily supposes nature as its foundation. The logic of place alone, as well as postmodern (de)constructivism⁴³, do no more than capsizing the modern paradigm into a phantasmal metabasism ; they do not overcome it.

In other words, landscape is what Zong Bing had anticipated : it is both a substance (that is a subject), and more than a substance (that is a predicate). This is to say that, for studying landscape, and the ecumene in general, we have to overcome the modern reduction of reality to the real. As physics itself has come to show, the real is unknowable, because it is unpredicable. Reality supposes the real, but also its predication by human existence. Landscape is a perfect example of this complex relationship, and this is why, outstandingly, it shows the way beyond modernity⁴⁴.

Sendai, 31 July 2000

APPENDIX - Abstract of *ECUMENE : An Introduction to the Study of Human Milieux* (*Écoumène : introduction à l'étude des milieux humains*) by Augustin BERQUE. Forthcoming in September 2000 at Éditions Belin, 8 rue Férou, 75006 Paris, France. E-mail : Marieclaude.brossollet@editions-belin.fr

Type of the book - 120 000 words in French ; no figures. Aims at an academic and/or cultivated readership. **Concerned disciplines** - philosophy ; geography ; environmental design (architecture, town planning, garden and landscape design). More broadly, semantics and social sciences in general.

Purport - Ontology lacks a geography, and geography lacks an ontology. The aim of the book is to fill this gap, basing on the idea that human existence is geographical ; not only in the obvious sense that we exist somewhere, but in the sense that being human necessarily implies a structural coupling of our animal body with a milieu which is the technical and symbolical extension of this body, and which at the same time is social and ecological. This coupling is called *mediance*. It expresses itself in the reality of the Ecumene, defined as the relationship of Humankind with the Earth, or the general combination of all human milieux.

Main topics

A. Existence and reality - The idea of mediance stems from three main sources :

- . First, the Heideggerian concept of *Ausser-sich-sein* (being outside of oneself), which Watsuji developed into that of *fūdosei*, defined as the structural moment of human existence. This amounts to the coupling of mediance.
- . Second, Leroi-Gourhan's concept of *corps social* (social body), implying the evolutionary process by dint of which the human species emerged. This process, through the development of technical and symbolical systems, exteriorised into a social body the functions which initially were directly those of our animal body (e.g. the functions of our teeth first being exteriorised into pebble tools, and now into robots handling pebbles on Mars). This exteriorised body of ours is here called *medial body* (as it is not only social, but also ecological). Mediance is the dynamic coupling of our animal and medial bodies.
- . Third, Merleau-Ponty's idea, recently developed by Lakoff and Johnson on the grounds of cognitive sciences, that thought stems from our flesh. Added to the findings of biosemiotics, this radically discards both the modern conception of thought as disembodied and the postmodern conception of meaning as a pure combination of signs.

The above sources found the idea that reality is neither purely objective, nor purely subjective, but *trajective*. Trajectivity means that, while our corporeity is technically projected into a world (our medial body), in return, the world is incorporated into our flesh by dint of the symbols which represent our medial body. This process of *coming out / coming in* of our corporeity is the pulsation of human existence. It can be exemplified by language, which is physically proffered by our animal body, but which needs the intermediation of our medial body (here the symbolic system of words) in order to convey meaning into the animal body of our partners. Thus, in order to function, language does not only need signs and referents, it basically needs the trajectivity of things in a certain milieu ; because its referents are not pure objects, but the 'as' (*en-tant-que*) in the terms of which things exist in that milieu ; e.g. petroleum exists *as* fuel for motors in our civilisation, but that was not the case for the Babylonians ; or the environment exists for us *as* landscape, but it existed otherwise before the notion of landscape was invented and named by Chinese poets in the IVth century AD, then rediscovered and renamed by European painters in the XVth century.

⁴³ Illustrated for example by Jacques DERRIDA (1993) *Khôra*, Paris : Galilée, where, like Nishida closes the world on itself, the *chôra* is closed on itself. I have criticized these Escherian figures in 'Chorésie', *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, 42 (1998), 117, 437-448 and in 'Lieu et modernité chez Nishida', *Anthropologie et sociétés*, 22 (1998), 3, 23-34. See also note 44.

⁴⁴ This question supposes ontological and epistemological considerations which have been abridged here. They are developed in my book *Écoumène. Introduction à l'étude des milieux humains*, Paris, Belin, 2000.

B. Place and the overcoming of modernity - Mediance and trajectivity imply that the place of any reality combines an existential and immeasurable aspect, referring to Plato's conception of the *chôra*, and a physical and/or measurable aspect, referring to Aristotle's conception of the *topos*. The Aristotelian logic of the identity of the subject (here symbolized as *IgS*), which is the principle of rational inference, is linked with the *topos*, whereas the *chôra* is linked with a logic of the identity of the predicate (here *IgP*), which is the principle of symbolicity. The reality of things in human milieu is thus symbolized as *IgS/IgP*, and that of human existence as *IgP/IgS* (meaning that the human is that being whose nature is to predicate itself). The modern paradigm was founded on the assumption that reality is purely *IgS*. Nishida's attempt to overcome this paradigm in fact only capsized it into *IgP*. By reducing reality to *IgS*, modernity has disrupted worldhood (*Weltlichkeit, sekaisei*), whereas, on the contrary, Nishida absolutised it. Both ways are misconceptions of reality, which necessarily couples our existence (*IgP/IgS*) with that of things (*IgS/IgP*); that is mediance, which can be symbolized as $(IgS/IgP)/(IgP/IgS)$.

C. Concrete topics - This conceptual frame is systematically expressed through examples ranging from the history of science to modern art and Chinese landscape poetry, yet mainly showing how Humankind concretely organized its relationship with the Earth; e.g. the system of rice cultivation in Java, the extension of dairy farming in Hokkaidô, the ecological constraints on gothic architecture in mediaeval Ile-de-France, Etruscan rites of city foundation, the birth of landscape in IVth c. Southern China, the pollution by snowmobiles in Yellowstone, the influence of poststructuralism on architecture, Aboriginal cosmology and present town planning in the Red Centre of Australia, etc.

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A. Berque has received several awards, including a *Prix de la Société de Géographie* in 1991 for his book *Médiance*, and the 1997 *Yamagata Bantô shô* for his works in Japanese studies. A general presentation of his theories has recently been published by Tôru Araki: *Along with Augustin Berque (Ogyusutan Beruku to tomo ni. Tokyo: Kenkyukai Signo, 1999)*.