

**From the origin of landscape  
to *The Origin of the Work of Art*  
– a mesological journey –**

by Augustin BERQUE

**Abstract** – In Zong Bing's words (c. 440 AD) "As for landscape, while possessing substance, it tends to the spiritual", as well as in Martin Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1935), one can find the same principle: the reality of human milieu, as well as that of living milieu in general, is established through a de-veiling (ἀ-λήθεια) of substantial identity as something (*als etwas*), which is analogous to the predication "S as P" (represented here as "S/P"). Yet if creed considers this de-veiling as truth (ἀλήθεια), on the contrary, for modern science, it is a veiling of the Real (S) by myth (P); unless science, in a mesological perspective overcoming modernity, comes to focus its research precisely on that relation S/P.

**1. Zong Bing's principle**

In the second sentence of what was the first treatise on landscape in human history, Zong Bing's (宗炳, 375/443)<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to landscape painting* (*Hua shanshui xu* 畫山水序), which was probably written around AD 440, one can read the following :

至於山水、質有而趣靈 *Zhi yu shanshui, zhi you er qu ling*<sup>2</sup>.  
As for landscape, while possessing substance, it tends to the spiritual.

What I translate here with "landscape", *shanshui* 山水 in Chinese, is literally "mounts (山) and waters (水)", "mounts and rivers". We shall see later how this term effectively took the acceptance of landscape, about one century before Zong Bing's treatise; but let us here rather examine the general meaning of the sentence, because the principle which it poses – Zong Bing's principle – relates precisely to the fact that "mounts and rivers", in a certain history and in a certain milieu, took the sense of "landscape".

This sentence has diversely been rendered by specialists. Nicole Vandier-Nicolas translates it with "Quant aux montagnes et aux eaux, tout en possédant une forme matérielle, elles tendent vers le spirituel (As for mountains and waters, while possessing a material form, they tend to the spiritual)"<sup>3</sup> ; Hubert Delahaye, "Prenons le cas des paysages : bien qu'ils soient constitués d'une substance physique, leur portée est spirituelle (Let us take the case of landscapes : though constituted with a physical substance, their range is spiritual)"<sup>4</sup> ; Yolaine Escande, with "Quant aux *shanshui*, leur substance [matérielle] (*zhi*) est ce que [nous en percevons] (*you*), et pourtant ils tendent vers l'efficacité spirituelle (*ling*)"<sup>5</sup> (as for *shanshui*,

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<sup>1</sup> I recast in this section a passage of my *Histoire de l'habitat idéal, de l'Orient vers l'Occident* (*History of the ideal abode, from East to West*), Paris, Le Félin, 2010, p. 112 sq. NB : in the present article, East Asian personal names are given in their normal order : patronymic first.

<sup>2</sup> One will find the complete Chinese text, with its translation and commentary in French, in Hubert DELAHAYE, *Les Premières peintures de paysage en Chine, aspects religieux*, Paris, École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1981.

<sup>3</sup> Nicole VANDIER-NICOLAS, *Esthétique et peinture de paysage en Chine (des origines aux Song)*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1982, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Delahaye, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> Yolaine ESCANDE, *La Culture du shanshui. Montagnes et eaux*, Paris, Hermann, 2005, p. 81.

their [material] substance (*zhi*) is that which [we perceive of them] (*you*), and yet they tend to spiritual efficiency (*ling*); square brackets and parentheses in the original) ; etc.

What I translate myself with “substance”, *zhi* 質, is often rendered with “material form”, or in Japanese<sup>6</sup> with the *kun* 訓 reading *katachi*, ordinarily attached to the sinogram 形 (which, as a matter of fact, can be translated with “material form”). “Material form” is a very particular way to translate *zhi*, but this can be explained by Zong Bing’s purpose as expounded in the rest of the text. Yet, one should first consider that *zhi*, here, is quite obviously opposed to *ling* 靈, “spirit, soul”. The underlying idea is that landscape possesses both a material and an immaterial dimension. Let us now have a closer look at that *zhi*. The sinogram 質 associates the radical 貝, which derives from the pictogram of a shell and represents the idea of monetary value, with the element 廾, pictogram of two identical axes, hence “equivalence”. The first meaning of *zhi* is that of something one can pawn, because it possesses an intrinsic value. From there derives, among others, the principal (still nowadays) meaning of 質 as “substance, proper nature”. As for 靈 (in the Japanese form, derived from the ancient form 靈, to-day 灵 in Chinese), there is a general agreement for seeing here the spiritual dimension of landscape. Yolaine Escande introduces an interesting precision in translating it with “spiritual efficiency”, which she opposes to the “material substance” given for *zhi*<sup>7</sup>.

I agree with Escande’s version, while sticking more simply to the couple “substantial/spiritual”. Then why, on such bases, talk of “Zong Bing’s principle”? Well, because it seems to me an inspired anticipation of the structural moment (*Strukturmoment*, i.e. dynamic coupling) which operates at the core of the mesological relation – the relation of living beings (and more particularly of human beings) with their environment, or, more exactly said, with their milieu.<sup>8</sup> This structural moment can be compared with the couple of subject and predicate (S is P) in logic, which, in the history of European thought, is homologous with the couple of substance and accident in metaphysics.<sup>9</sup> In its physical basis (S), landscape is indeed the substantial subject to which one attaches an insubstantial predicate (P), which affords it a meaning, thus instituting it as a landscape. Of course, this is not what Zong Bing says; but what he says, in the terms of his time, is homologous to what I want to say now. The essential lies in the gearing (corresponding to what is called *trajection* in mesology)<sup>10</sup> which, between the two terms of the couple, is represented by the conjunction *er* 而, “yet also”. With that *er*, there is no rupture between the first and the second terms of the couple ; but a continuity which, yet, introduces something else. Indeed, P is attached to S, but it is not S ; it is only the third term according to which S can exist for a certain interpret I, in the ternarity S-I-P (S exists as P for I).

It is worthwhile, for understanding this trajection (the disclosure of S as P for I), to refer to the etymology of the sinogram 而 : it is a pictogram, representing the long hanging bristles of a goatee. The sound *er* allies it with *er*, “adorn” – which is written either 珥

<sup>6</sup> For instance ÔMURO Mikio, *Enrin toshi. Chûsei Chûgoku no sekaizô* 園林都市. 中世中国の世界像 (*Park city. The world image or mediaeval China*), Tokyo, Sanseidô, 1985, p. 515.

<sup>7</sup> Escande 2005, p. 81.

<sup>8</sup> I shall explain later the difference between environment (*Umgebung*, *shizen kankyô* 自然環境) and milieu (*Umwelt*, *fûdo* 風土).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 1287 (at *substance*): “Substance & accidents in metaphysics correspond to subject & predicate in logic”.

<sup>10</sup> Mesology (*Umweltlehre* in Uexküll’s sense) studies the relationship of living beings with their milieu (*Umwelt*), not to be confused with the environment (*Umgebung*), which is the object of ecology (*Ökologie*). On this, see my *La Mésologie, pourquoi et pour quoi faire?*, Paris La Défense, Presses Universitaires de Paris Ouest, 2014.

(earring), or 輜 (adorned cart, i.e. hearse) – ; as a matter of fact, the goatee adorns the chin, but it is not the chin itself. The *hupokeimenon*, the substantial subject, it is the chin.

Trajection, then. But in which way ? In the way drawn by the predicate (I shall not go as far as to write : the way in which I pulls the goatee<sup>11</sup> ); because, corresponding to that drawing or pulling, in Zong Bing’s sentence, we have the word *qu* 趣, “tending to”. Here again, etymology is interesting : it associates 走, “running”, et 取, “taking” ; i.e. “running in order to take”. Thus mounts and waters, material substance of the landscape, run and take the meaning which they are adorned with by spirit, or more widely by human predication (through the senses, action, thought and language). Or again, *the landscape relation runs from the substance to the predicate* (which is unsubstantial).

Such is Zong Bing’s principle. It condenses the essential of the mesological relation in its historical work of assuming the Earth (S) as a certain world (P), which we shall discuss later.

Let me repeat that it is only homologically that Zong Bing can be considered as the father of this “Zong Bing’s principle”. What he was really thinking of are things of his time. As writes Obi Kôichi<sup>12</sup>, “landscape thinking” (*sansui shisô* 山水思想) was born at the crossroads of Taoism and Buddhism, more particularly of their eremitic variants. On this point, I shall here just refer to Delahaye’s erudite investigation, and rather precise from the lexical point of view how one passed from mounts and waters to the notion of landscape ; in other words how, illustrating Zong Bing’s principle, the raw environmental datum (the *Umgebung*, as Uexküll would have said) became a certain milieu (an *Umwelt*), characterised – for the first time in human history – by the notion of landscape<sup>13</sup>.

## 2. From mountain waters to landscape

Water in landscapes is not simply dihydrogen monoxyde (H<sub>2</sub>O) here and there, a thing which is not only encountered on the Earth but elsewhere also in the solar system<sup>14</sup>. On the Earth itself, nor is it only that aqueous solution – water – the physical structure of which, in the form of droplets, may have been conducive to the apparition of life<sup>15</sup>, and which anyhow is necessary to living beings, thus correlatively to the existence of ecosystems. Water in landscapes is even something more; because it necessitates the existence of human beings, and more specifically of human beings who, precisely, consider that (S) *as landscape* (P). Now, differing from the biosphere and its ecosystems, contrarily to common opinion, this “as landscape” without which there could not be such a thing as a landscape, is in no means universal. It appeared at a certain time in history, in a certain culture ; precisely in the IV<sup>th</sup> century of the Christian era, in Southern China. It is from there that it expanded elsewhere – notably in Europe, in the Renaissance, though one cannot exclude that this may have been an independent event –, first among idle and cultivated elites, then little by little among other social strata, until it became that thing: landscape, which seems to us universal.

Yet this assumption of the environmental datum as a landscape, how did it work? That is a complex problem. Here, before coming to a properly ontological analysis, I shall

<sup>11</sup> Grammarians call this figure une *preterition*.

<sup>12</sup> OBI Kôichi, *Chûgoku no inton shisô. Tô Enmei no kokoro no kiseki* 中国の隱遁思. 陶淵明の心の軌跡 (*Eremitic thought in China. The traces of Tao Yuanming’s heart*), Tokyo, Chuôkôronsha, 1988, p. 122.

<sup>13</sup> I have argued this thesis in several works, lately in *Thinking through landscape*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2013.

<sup>14</sup> I draw here from my article ‘L’eau dans les paysages’, in Agathe EUZEN, Catherine JEANDEL and Rémy MOSSERI, *L’eau à découvert*, chap. VI, Paris, CNRS, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> See *Science & vie*, n° 1169, Feb. 2015, p. 42 *sqq.* ‘L’énergie de la vie : elle tient dans une goutte d’eau’. Recent experiences made at Strasbourg University have shown that the superficial tension of a droplet of water accelerates chemical reactions, letting molecules interlink without an external intervention. Hence a new hypothesis on the origin of life: it may have appeared in clouds, and from there may have fertilized primitive Earth.

approach it in terms of Chinese philology, more specifically that of *wenyan* (文言, the classical written language), basing on a huge study led by a team of Japanese sinologists under the direction of Gotô Akinobu and Matsumoto Hajime<sup>16</sup>.

The book analyses a certain number of representative words in the vocabulary of classical Chinese poetry<sup>17</sup>. Part II, entitled “The research of landscape” (*Sansui no tankyû* 山水の探求), is presented in the following way in the preface (p. ii) : “Focussing the analysis on *shan* 山 and *shui* 水, one classifies here the poetic vocabulary relative to natural landscapes (*shizen no fûkei* 自然の風景). *Shan* and *shui* are often chanted relatively to each other in classical Chinese poetry, where, as symbols of the world, they have a great semantic importance”. This part studies, among others, the three words *shanshui*, *shanchuan* 山川, and *shanhe* 山河. Each of these three words is composed with two sinograms. Their first element, *shan*, is identical and signifies “mountain”. Their second element varies, but *shui* as well as *chuan* and *he* are synonymic in the sense of “watercourse”. They respectively have the following acceptations, according to the *Grand Ricci, dictionnaire de la langue chinoise*<sup>18</sup> :

- *shui* 水 : water, aquatic, liquid, juice, watercourse, river, spring, pond, lake, sea, inundation, flood ; and diverse symbolically derived meanings, such as that of planet Mercury.
- *chuan* 川 : river, big watercourse, steep valley, torrent, plain, plateau, continuous, incessant, cook in boiling water.
- *he* 河 : river, watercourse, Milky Way, mouth.

As for the three compounds *shanshui*, *shanchuan* and *shanhe*, the *Ricci* defines them as follows :

- *shanshui* 山水 : mounts and watercourses, mountain torrent, landscape.
- *shanchuan* 山川 : mounts and watercourses, land.
- *shanhe* 山河 : mounts and watercourses, aspect of the land, land, landscape, distant, immobile gravity (of a mountain) and ample majesty (of a river): dignified and solemn attitude.

Entitled *Shanshui*, *shanchuan*, *shanhe*, the chapter which concerns us most directly, written by Katô Bin, starts with noting that, in classical poetry, *shanshui* signifies “either mounts and rivers, or the aspect of a nature composed with mounts and rivers” (p. 75). It is a word which “expresses that nature is the object of an aesthetical enjoyment” (p. 76). Katô then deals with the respective connotations of *shanshui*, *shanchuan* and *shanhe*. *Chuan* is more concrete than *shui*, which in this context comprises indifferently watercourses and lakes.

For a long time, *shan* and *shui* have appeared separately. Such is the case of a famous passage of Confucius’ (551/479) *Analects*, in which it is said that “The sage enjoy water, the benevolent mountain”<sup>19</sup> (*Zhizhe le shui, renzhe le shan* 知者樂水、仁者樂山) ». Specialists

<sup>16</sup> GOTÔ Akinobu and MATSUMOTO Hajime, eds, *Shigo no imêji. Tôshi wo yomu tame ni* 詩語のイメージ。唐詩を読むために (*The images of poetical words. For reading Tang poetry*), Tokyo, Tôhō shoten, 2000. I draw here from my article ‘From flood control to aesthetics’, *International Journal of Water Resources Management*, vol. XXV, 2009, n°4, p. 585-591.

<sup>17</sup> Said in Japanese *tôshi* 唐詩, “Tang poetry”, the Tang dynasty (618-907) being considered as the golden age of classical Chinese poetry ; but in fact, *tôshi* is generally synonymous with “classical Chinese poetry”, *kanshi* 漢詩 (“Han poetry”).

<sup>18</sup> I simplify somewhat, in particular concerning *shui* which, in the *Ricci*, has twenty principal definitions, to say nothing of the derived ones.

<sup>19</sup> The *Ricci* comments here that: “the sage recognize themselves in the water which diffuses itself, and the benevolent in the mountain which rises up : the sage like movement and the benevolent tranquillity”. A few lines

agree to say that the question here is not about landscape. For Escande, who translates “L’homme bienveillant prend plaisir dans la montagne (*shan*), l’homme sage prend plaisir dans l’eau (*shui*)”<sup>20</sup> – Benevolent people take pleasure in mountain (*shan*), sage people in water (*shui*) –; “what counts is neither the *shan* nor the *shui* as such, but benevolence and wisdom, of which mountain and water are metaphors”<sup>21</sup>. According to Donald Holzman, who renders the sentence with “Those who are intelligent love water, those who are good love the mountains”, most commentators see here “water for the symbol of ceaseless activity, the mountains, for stability and solidity”<sup>22</sup>. As for Katô, he makes the following comment: “Gloss considers that the sage see in the unceasing changes of running water the free configurations of wisdom manifesting itself, whereas the benevolent see in the aspect of the mountain, whose stability shelters thousands of things, the apparition of benevolence; yet the fact remains that *shan* and *shui* are here considered in their contrast”<sup>23</sup>.

It is this contrastive relation of *shan* and *shui* which structures Katô’s argument. He analyses diverse occurrences of this couple at the time of the Warring States (-475/-221). Those where *shan* and *shui* are joined into one word are exceptional. One of the most significant ones may be found in Mozi (or Mo Di, c.-468/c.-376) : “There are demons of the sky, as there are demons and spirits of mounts and waters (*shanshui guishen* 山水鬼神)”<sup>24</sup>. Katô judges that, here, the word *shanshui* signifies mountains on the one hand, and on the other hand waters in the double meaning of rivers and lakes. However, the concerned text employing eight times the same locution *shanshui guishen*, it forms without doubt a semantic unit, in which the determinant is *shanshui*, and the determined *guishen*. Thus, the question is about the diverse categories of demons and spirits, rather than about the environment, which is not considered for itself (and even less as landscape) but merely as the abode of the said demons and spirits.

Now, these demons and spirits are in no ways hospitable. The expression which traditionally designates them in Chinese, *chimei wangliang* 魑魅魍魎<sup>25</sup>, eventually took the figurative sense of “wicked person”. The *chimei*, who haunt mountains, forests and swamps, are quadrupeds with a human face, who torment people. The *chi* look like tigers and have a liking for mountains, the *mei* like valleys and resemble boars. As for the *wangliang*, who may present themselves under the guise of a three year old child with long ears and red eyes, they deceive humans by imitating their voices, and they dwell in any wild places, waters, rocks or trees.

These remarks<sup>26</sup> concord with a classical study by Paul Demiéville, “La montagne dans l’art littéraire chinois”<sup>27</sup> (Mountain in Chinese literary art), the general meaning of which being that, before the great reversal which we shall deal with below, mountains, their forests and torrents have been the domain of fear, a fear more intense than that which shows through

before, at *chih che le shui*, the same Ricci writes that : “The sage find their pleasure in looking at water : the sage like apprehending the things of life as water, which flows relentlessly”.

<sup>20</sup> Escande, *op. cit.* p. 37. Katô for his part writes (p. 76) “Chisha wa mizu wo konomi, jinsha wa yama wo konomu” (The sage like water, the benevolent mountain).

<sup>21</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>22</sup> Donald HOLZMAN, *Landscape appreciation in ancient and early medieval China : the birth of landscape poetry*, Hsin-chu, National Tsing Hua University, 1996, p. 28 sq.

<sup>23</sup> Katô in Gotô, *op. cit.* p. 76.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted by Katô, p. 77.

<sup>25</sup> According to the Ricci, these are “geniuses of the mountains, forests or swamps, evil geniuses, evil spirits”.

<sup>26</sup> Which I extract from various dictionaries (the Ricci, the *Kôjien* and the *Daijigen*). In Japanese, *chimei wangliang* is read *chimi môryô*.

<sup>27</sup> Initially published in *France-Asie*, CLXXXIII (1965), p. 7-32, and taken up again in Paul DEMIÉVILLE, *Choix d’études sinologiques (1921-1970)*, Leiden, Brill, 1973, p. 390-406.

Graeco-Roman mythology. We do not imagine nymph Echo in the guise of a *wangliang*, though they are strictly homologous...

The fact remains that, for still a long time, *shan* and *shui* figure ordinarily as separate words, whichever may be their semantic relation: “whether or not this relation facilitated their composition into such a term as *shanshui*, the fact is that, rather than *shanshui*, it is *shanchuan* which is more often used”<sup>28</sup>. As a matter of fact, until the Qin dynasty (-221/-207), *shanshui* remains quite rare. Analysing its occurrences, Katô deems that the word signifies then “waters of the mountain (*yama no mizu* 山の水), a meaning which from thereon remained at the semantic core of *shanshui*”<sup>29</sup>.

Under the Han (-206/220), the Three Kingdoms (220/265) and toward the beginning of the Six Dynasties (265/580) *shanshui* remains seldom used, and most of the time keeps that meaning, “waters of the mountain”. Katô emphasizes, moreover, that it is not used in poetry, a proof that it had no aesthetical connotation. One meets it generally in the vocabulary of engineers, a domain where it designates clearly torrents, coming down from the mountains, the question being how to temperate their violences or make use of their water for irrigation.

In poetry, the first occurrence of *shanshui* is due to Zuo Si (c. 250/c. 305), who lived under the Western Jin (265/316)<sup>30</sup>. The word is found in the first of his *Two poems on inviting a hermit* (*Zhao yinzhe er shou* 招隱者二首). Such a theme is classical in Chinese poetry: a mandarin, who has chosen to retire far from the city and from administration, is requested to come back, because his great virtues are necessary to the kingdom. This gives Zuo Si an occasion to describe the place of this retreat in the wilderness. One can read there the following two verses:

非必糸与竹 *Fei bi si yu zhu*          No need of thread and bamboo<sup>31</sup>  
 山水有清音 *Shanshui you qing yin*      The waters of the mountain have a pure sound

where, manifestly, *shanshui* designates a mountain torrent, but also where, no less manifestly, this word is charged with a positive aesthetical value, as well as all the environment described in the rest of the poem.

That is a revolution in comparison with the terrors which the mountainous domain inspired traditionally. However, we are still here in a transitory stage, were enjoyment of the mountainous landscape there is, but not yet a word for saying such a thing. Now, the two poems concerned won a great public favour, particularly the two verses above. In those times where poems were really chanted, they were on all cultivated lips. During the few following decades, *shanshui* was to crystallize this favour, a process at the end of which the word acquired a new meaning – that of landscape:

“Due to having been employed in this poem, *shanshui* will little by little take a meaning expressing aesthetically the sensible scenery<sup>32</sup> of nature, composed with mountains and rivers, and fraught with purity”<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> Katô, *op. cit.* p. 77.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> This dynasty, which reunified the empire in 265, was obliged to take refuge in 317 South of the Blue River, expelled from the North by the Barbarians. It established its new capital in Jiankang (Nanking), which was situated more eastwards than the former capital, Luoyang. One thus distinguished the Western Jin (265/316) from the Eastern Jin (317/420).

<sup>31</sup> That is music instruments, of which these are the material. The poem is reproduced by Katô p. 79 *sq.*

<sup>32</sup> In Japanese *jôkei* 情景, which the *Kenkyûsha* renders follows: “1. a scene, a sight. 2. nature and sentiment”. It is the Chinese *qingjing*, which the *Ricci* translates: “1. state of thing, situation, circumstances. 2. impression,

There is no doubt about it when, among the poems composed on the third of the third month of 353 at the Pavilion of Orchids appear distiches<sup>34</sup> like the following, by Wang Huizhi :

散懷山水	<i>San huai shanshui</i>	Diverting my heart in the landscape
蕭然忘羈	<i>Xiaoran wang ji</i>	Absent-mindedly, I forget my halter <sup>35</sup>



disposition, state of mind” ». Escande (*op. cit.*, p. 161) defines this term as “the emotional dimension of landscape”. I have chosen “sensible scenery”, *jing* (visible scene, scenery) being in that word determined by *qing*, “sentiment, emotion”. It is as well a state of mind as an environment. One could probably more aptly render it with “sentiscape”.

<sup>33</sup> Katô, p. 81.

<sup>34</sup> Composing such distiches was a game accompanying banquets like that of Lanting : in a vast garden where ran a brook, one let, upstream, cups of wine derive downstream, and each guest, sitting on both sides of the brook, had to write a distich before a cup reached him. As for gardens and wine, no civilization ever imagined such a refined combination. The anthology of these poems was introduced by a text due to Wang Xizhi’s brush, *Preface of the Pavilion of orchids* (*Lanting xu* 蘭亭序), whose calligraphy is deemed in China to be the masterpiece of all times (there remains only copies of it).

<sup>35</sup> That is from mundane obligations, which an anchorite was supposed to have rejected (although such distiches, as well as the concerned eremitism, were in themselves, at the time, marks of a very worldly snobism); but one may also understand here that Wang Huizhi, fascinated by the landscape, forgot to harness his horse. I prefer the first hypothesis, more appropriate to the ideology of the time, and to the fact that a mandarin did not harness his mount with his own hands.

Mountain waters : *asif* Iseksawan at Tigemmi Igiz, Western High Atlas. Photo Francine Adam.

or this one, by Sun Tong :

地主觀山水 *Dizhu guan shanshui* The landowner looks at the landscape  
 仰尋幽人踪 *Yang xun you ren zong* Upward, searching traces of anchorites<sup>36</sup>

One sees here that, from thereon, *shanshui* signified clearly “landscape”. However, though the former acceptance of the word, “mountain waters” had been blurred, it was not erased, since on the one hand, still nowadays, *shanshui* does not designate any kind of landscape, but a landscape with mountains and waters, and on the other hand, that same word *shanshui* continues to evoke the purity of mountain waters : it has kept its lustral virtues, which, besides, one may have an inkling of in Wang Huizhi’s poem. *Shanshui* is indeed that which washes away the “dust” (*chen* 塵) of the world, which – as in the West –, above all, is embodied by the city.

### 3. Assuming the Earth as a world

Let us come back to Zong Bing’s principle. What we just have seen is, in sum, how the substance of mountain waters (*zhi* 質) has tended (*qu* 趣) toward the spirit (*ling* 靈), i.e. the meaning of “landscape”. As I wrote above, this operation can be assimilated with what in mesology is a trajection, which makes it homologous to the predication “S as P” in logic. Mounts and waters (S), from thereon, have existed (*ek-sisted*) as landscapes (P) ; in other words, S was deployed as P out of the closed self-identity of its own substance.

One may certainly liken this trajection to that which, in semiotics, is at work between the signifier and the signified. The signifier  $S^a$  here is the substance S, that is the material form of mounts and waters, and the signified  $S^e$  is the spirit P, that is what we understand with the word “landscape”; however, I shall here open a more ontological track. One may indeed have noted, in parallel, the role of poetry in that operation. As a matter of fact, it is poetry which gave to “mountain waters” the sense of “landscape”. Would that only be a question of words ? Far from it ! What in that matter is poetic, or more aptly said *poietic*, is to have *made mounts and waters exist as landscape*, in an ontogenetical process which is much more general than the sole literary trope of metaphor: properly a *poietics* of reality (S as P), both as the opening of a world and the deployment of Being – let it be said in reference to one of the great texts of the last century, Martin Heidegger’s *The Origin of the Work of Art* (*Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*)<sup>37</sup>, which I shall interpret here from the point of view of mesology.<sup>38</sup>

This text is certainly Heidegger’s most famous writing on art. Now, though “origin” does translate *Ursprung*, the English word does not evoke the image which the German expresses here ; that is, the primal (*ur*) springing out (*Sprung*) of something which is going to

<sup>36</sup> In the Chinese tradition, a hermit having observed a convenient asceticism will attain the immortality of a *xianren* 仙人, but by that very fact he becomes invisible, confused within the mountain itself. The two poems are quoted by Katô p. 81 sq.

<sup>37</sup> Text initially written in 1935, and somewhat recast later. I refer here to the translation by Wolfgang Brokmeier, published in the French edition of *Holzwege* (1949), *Chemins qui ne mènent nulle part*, Paris, Gallimard, 1962, p. 13-98. As for the original, I refer to the *Gesamtausgabe, V : Holzwege*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1977 (which is not exactly the same text as that translated by Brokmeier).

<sup>38</sup> In what follows, I integrate some passages of my article ‘Du monde et de la Terre dans *L’Origine de l’œuvre d’art* – une lecture mésologique’, forthcoming in *Prometeo, Laboratori di scrittura sul rapporto tra arte e scienza*.



exist – *ek-sist* – through a “springing-out”, out of something which otherwise would not exist for us. Going directly to the conclusion which I intend to draw, what is at work here is the birth (the *genesis*) of reality (S/P : “S as P”) out of the Earth (S), by dint of the “as” put into work by art. It is *the Earth taken as a world*, and the poetical work of art is in that “as”.<sup>39</sup>

Is that really what Heidegger wants to say? For sure, the intended obscurity of his text allows to discuss about it indefinitely; yet the author who expresses himself in *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1935) is not another man than the one who, five years earlier, wrote for his seminar (1929-1930) the draft of *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics (Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik)*<sup>40</sup>, where he disserts at length about “as” (*als*)<sup>41</sup>; and he has not get rid, as through a mutation, of the *Grundstimmung* which he professes there – in sum, the idea that this *als* is an ontogenetical trope, out of which springs existence (*ek-sistence*).<sup>42</sup> He has not changed for another ground (*Grund*). Moreover, these are not only presumptions, and the matter is not about the sole Heidegger. Now, when the latter writes these hieratic lines:

“Standing on the rock, the work which the temple is opens a world, and, in return, establishes it on the Earth, which, only then, appears as a native ground (*heimatlicher Grund*). For men and animals, men and things never are given and known as invariable objects (...). It is the temple which, by its standing-there, gives things their face, and men the view on themselves”<sup>43</sup>,

one must remind that before him, Uexküll<sup>44</sup> – whose mesology (*Umweltlehre*) profoundly influenced Heideggerian ontology<sup>45</sup> – had already shown that “an animal cannot enter into a relationship with an object as such”<sup>46</sup>, because it is not with the abstract objects of the

<sup>39</sup> From the point of view of mesology, let us here understand art as human work in general, which, out of the biosphere, has deployed the *ecumene* (the whole of human milieu, i.e. the relationship of Humankind with the Earth). On this deployment, see my *Écoumène. Introduction à l'étude des milieux humains*, Paris, Belin, 2000, and more particularly my *Poétique de la Terre. Histoire naturelle et histoire humaine, essai de mésologie*, Paris, Belin, 2014.

<sup>40</sup> Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann, 1983.

<sup>41</sup> Notably from a logical point of view. Commenting the enunciative proposition in Aristotle, he shows (p. 466 in the German text, my transl.) that the Stagyrite, when speaking of *σύνθεσις*, “(...) means that which we call the ‘structure of as’ (*Alsstruktur*). That is what he wants to say, without truly progressing expressly in the dimension of this problem. The *structure of ‘as’*, the *already unifying perception* (*vorgängige einheitbildende Vernehmen*) of something as something (etwas als etwas), is the *condition of possibility* of the truth or of the falseness of the *λόγος*”. This “already unifying perception”, Heidegger assimilates it (§ 69) to the predication of “a as b”, which makes that “a is b”. It is the “structural moment of the evidence” (*Strukturmoment der Offenbarkeit*) by dint of which the things appear as something.

<sup>42</sup> See for instance *Die Grundbegriffe...*, *op. cit.*, p. 432 : “Dasein signifies, among others : relating, through being, to being as such, and this to the point that this relationship participates in constituting the Dasein’s *being-a being*, a guise of being which we call *existence*” (Dasein heißt unter anderem : seiend zu Seiendem als solchem sich verhalten, so zwar, daß dieses Verhalten das Seiend-*sein* des Daseins mit ausmacht, welches Sein wird als *Existenz* bezeichnen). This “being as such” is for example mountain waters (*shanshui*) as a landscape (*shanshui*), which supposes the existence of mandarins in order to see them as such; or petroleum (S) as a resource for energy (P), which supposes that people have invented the combustion engine; because in its proper substance (S), oil is not a resource; it is only a raw geological datum (*Umgebung*), which is there for nothing. It is only the combustion engine which “makes it come out” (*ausmacht*), i.e. *ek-sist* out of its in-itself (*an sich*) as a resource : “oil”. About the “holds” (*prises*) or affordances (resources, constraints, risks and delights) which are engendered by the “as” constitutive of the *ecumene*, see my *Écoumène*, *op. cit.*

<sup>43</sup> Martin HEIDEGGER, *Chemins qui ne mènent nulle part*, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>44</sup> Jakob von UEXKÜLL, *Streifzüge durch die Umwelten von Tieren und Menschen (Raids into the milieux of animals and humans)*, Hamburg, Rowohlt, 1956 (1934).

<sup>45</sup> This has been underlined, among others, by Giorgio AGAMBEN, *L’Ouvert : de l’homme et de l’animal*, Paris, Payot et Rivages, 2002 (*L’aperto. L’uomo e l’animale*, 2002).

<sup>46</sup> *Streifzüge*, *op. cit.*, p. 105: “die stillschweigende Voraussetzung, ein Tier könne jemals mit einem Gegenstand in Beziehung treten, falsch ist”.

*Umgebung* it is in relation with, but with the concrete things of its own *Umwelt* – the milieu it has deployed out of the crude environmental datum, which is only the raw material of a milieu.

Now, these things are “concrete” by dint of their growing-together – their *cum-crescere*, hence *concretus* – with that which Plato would have called the *genesis* of the animal itself in the sensible world (*kosmos aisthetos*), that is, in the present occurrence, in that milieu. In the concrete reality ( $r = S/P$ , i.e. S as P, the *Umgebung* as an *Umwelt*, mounts and waters as a landscape...) of a certain milieu, indeed, beings and things match together, because, trajectively, the life of living beings takes things as something adequate to their very being, that is, to their own selfhood.

This indeed is not Uexküll’s vocabulary, but it is what he shows when he speaks of “counterpoint as a motive of morphogenesis” (*Kontrapunkt als Motiv der Formbildung*)<sup>47</sup> in a living world, and when he poses that

“The basic technical rule which expresses itself in the floweriness (*Blumenhaftigkeit*) of the bee and in the beeness (*Bienenhaftigkeit*) of the flower can be applied to the other examples quoted above.

For sure, the cobweb conforms itself flyally (*Sicher ist das Spinnennetz fliegenhaft gestaltet*), because the spider itself is flyal. Being flyal (*Fliegenhaft sein*) means that the spider, in its constitution, has incorporated certain elements of the fly. Not from a determined fly, but from the archetype (*Urbild*) of the fly. Better said, the flyness (*Fliegenhaftigkeit*) of the spider signifies that it has incorporated, in its corporeal composition, certain motifs of the fly-melody (*Fliegenmelodie*)”<sup>48</sup>.

Indeed, for Uexküll, the “technique of nature” (*die Naturtechnik*) works as a symphony, the diverse traits of which are in “contrapuntal relationships” (*kontrapunktischen Beziehungen*)<sup>49</sup>. By forming itself, each one forms the others. That is to say that the “as” which generates a milieu out of the environment modifies the environment itself, with its substantial elements. In sum, it accomplishes not only (immaterially or predicatively) a cosmogenetic, but also (materially or substantially) an ontogenetic function.

Now, in a human world, it is human work which fulfils this function, especially through technique and symbol, making and saying. As it happens here, in Heidegger’s image, it is the temple which lets the things around exist as what they are :

“On the rock, the temple reposes its constancy. This “reposing-on” brings out the dark of its raw support which, though, is forced to nothing (*doch zu nichts gedrängten*). In its constancy, the built work resists the tempest passing over it, thus demonstrating the tempest itself in all its violence. The brightness and the light of its stone, which it apparently owes only to the sun’s favour, bring out the clearness of the day, the wideness of the sky, the darkness of the night.”<sup>50</sup>

Yet what does this mysterious “forced to nothing” mean? It gets clearer if one remembers that Uexküll had shown that the objects which, in the *Umgebung*, do not belong to the *Umwelt* of a certain living being, do not exist for it. For an animal, what exists is that which participates in the “functional circle” (*Funktionskreis*) linking its “actible world” (*Wirkwelt*) with its “sensible world” (*Merkwelt*)<sup>51</sup> ; because “as many performances (*Leistungen*) an animal is able to accomplish, as many objects (*Gegenstände*) is it able to

<sup>47</sup> *Streifzüge...*, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>48</sup> *Streifzüge...*, *op. cit.*, p. 145. My translation.

<sup>49</sup> *Streifzüge...*, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>50</sup> *Chemins...*, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>51</sup> See fig. 3 in *Streifzüge...*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

distinguish in its milieu”<sup>52</sup> ; but it does not care for the rest of the environmental datum, which, “forced to nothing”, is literally there for nothing.

The same principle holds in the eco-techno-symbolical and historical terms of a human world. For example, exploiting the biggest aquifer on our planet, the fossil Albian table in Northern Sahara, needed the knowledge of modern geology and the modern techniques of deep boring. Before that, the table, concretely, neither existed as a resource, nor as anything else. It did not “spring out” and *ek-sist* out of its own substance: forced to nothing by any human work, it was literally there for nothing.

This raw support which is there for nothing – i.e. that which, in the *Umgebung*, has not been concretely discovered, opened, trajected as something –, it is the “lying-below” (*hupokeimenon*) which remains undisclosed in the *an sich* of the (logical) subject S, identical to its own substance and inaccessible until it has been predicated as a certain world (P).<sup>53</sup> Yet even that S which, as a certain predicate (P), has been disclosed and thus has become reality (S/P), does not thereby cease to exist in itself (S). This raw material (S) which, at the same time, offers itself as a world (P) and retires itself in its own substance (S), in other words

“That into which the work retires itself, and that which it brings out through this retirement, we named it the Earth. It is that which, coming out, takes back in its womb (*das Hervorkommend-Bergende*). The Earth is the untired and unwearable inflow of that which is there for nothing. On the Earth and in it, historical man finds his stay in the world. Installing a world, the work makes the Earth come forth (*Indem das Werk eine Welt aufstellt, stellt es die Erde her*). The work holds and maintains the Earth itself in the open of a world. The work lets the Earth be an earth (*das Werk läßt die Erde eine Erde sein*)”.<sup>54</sup>

Now, from what would the “as” (the work) liberate the Earth ? From the shackle of its self identity (S), in order to make it the concrete reality (S/P) of a true ground, that is, to make it come out (*herstellen*: pro-duce it) as a certain world (P). Heidegger says, for sure, that “this pro-ducing must be thought of in the strong sense of the word” (*das Herstellen ist hier im strengen Sinne des Worts zu denken*), but he would have failed in his mission of “magus of the Black Forest”<sup>55</sup> (Schwarzwald) if he had clarified that meaning, by bringing it together with the *als* of which, five years before, his *Grundbegriffe* nonetheless spoke explicitly; that is, the assumption of S as P, which pro-duces (*stellt her*) reality (S/P).

What, on the other hand, Heidegger explicitly says is that this operation is a de-veiling ( $\acute{\alpha}$ -λήθεια, from λήθειν, to hide) of truth ( $\acute{\alpha}$ λήθεια), from the darkness of its raw support (the Earth). Now, this is indeed that in which S, disclosed and deployed as P, becomes S/P: a human reality; but it is not simple, since

“The being-disclosed (*Unverborgenheit*) of the being is never a state which would already be there, but always an advent. Being disclosed (truth) is neither a quality of the things – in the sense of the being (*im Sinne des Seienden*) – nor a quality of the statements. (...) *Suspending itself in the guise of the double hiding (in der Weise des zwiefachen Verbergens) belongs to the essence of truth. Truth is, in its essence, non-truth*”<sup>56</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> *Streifzüge...*, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>53</sup> Mesology owes to Nishida Kitarô the idea that the historical world (*rekishisekai* 歴史世界) is a predicative world (*jutsugosekai* 述語世界).

<sup>54</sup> *Gesamtausgabe*, *op. cit.* p. 32. Unless one sees in this *läßt* a mere factitive, this may imply that the Earth itself would aspire to be that which history has made of it, i.e. the soil (*Boden*) proper to a certain nation (*Volk*) – a destinal vision, to say the least, which I shall not discuss here.

<sup>55</sup> Jean-Claude Beaune’s expression.

<sup>56</sup> *Gesamtausgabe*, *op. cit.*, p. 41. *Verbergen*, to hide, is in sum λήθειν.

That truth would be non-truth looks as unthinkable as a zen *kôan*<sup>57</sup>; yet it is clear that, inasmuch as it is the “as” of ἀ-λήθεια, truth is neither S in its substance, nor P in its non-substance (that as which S exists – *ek-sists, ur-springt [prime-springs]* – in the eyes of a certain being), in the trinity of S-I-P. “In the guise of the double hiding”, it is neither the one nor the other, neither only S nor only P, but, inbetween, a third term: S as P – and thus it belongs to a *meso-logic* which is neither the logic of the identity of the subject S (that of Aristotle, which founded scientific rationalism on the absolutisation of S)<sup>58</sup>, nor the logic of the identity of the predicate P (that of Nishida, *jutsugo no ronri* 述語の論理, whose essence is religious since it absolutises P)<sup>59</sup>. In other words, it comes forth precisely in that which Heidegger calls a dispute (*Streit*) between earth and world, and which, amounting to the “as” in the relation S/P (S as P, i.e. reality), is in sum nothing else than the trajection of the *Umgebung* into an *Umwelt*, the Earth into a certain world.

If it is case, would then the said truth come under art rather than under science ? This is indeed what Heidegger says:

“Instituting truth in the work is producing a being which before was not, and from thereon will never come forth again. (...) Truth institutes itself in the work. Truth deploys its Being as a dispute between disclosure and closure, in the adversity of world and earth”<sup>60</sup>,

whereas

“Science, on the contrary, is not an inaugural advent of truth, but always an exploitation of an already disclosed region of what is true”<sup>61</sup>,

which leads Heidegger to this conclusion :

“The essence of art is the Poem. The essence of the Poem is instituting truth.”<sup>62</sup>.

Now, from a mesological point of view, the poietic assumption of S as P is reality (*r = S/P*) rather than truth, which in principle is the adequation of P to S. That is, at least, in the sense of science – but this sense is an abstract one, since the very fact of attaining S is, concretely, to predicate it as a certain P, and thus, in fact, to discover a new reality (S/P)<sup>63</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> Heidegger’s borrowings to Eastern thought have been analysed by Reinhard MAY, *Ex oriente lux. Heideggers Werk unter ostasiatischem Einfluss*, Stuttgart, F. Steiner Verlag, 1989 ; translated by Graham Parkes as *Heidegger’s hidden sources. East Asian influences on his work*, Abingdon, Routledge, 1996. For my part, I suppose that the Nishidian idea of a predicative world (*jutsugo sekai* 述語世界) may have influenced in some way the Heideggerian idea of a dispute (*Streit*) between earth and world, since the said *Streit* is homologous to the “as” trajecting the Earth (S) as a world (P).

<sup>58</sup> Let us remind that the logician’s *subject* is the physicist’s *object* : that which the matter is about, S.

<sup>59</sup> NB : Nishida speaks indifferently of “logic of the predicate” and of “logic of place” (*basho no ronri* 場所の論理). On this theme, see Augustin BERQUE, ‘La logique du lieu dépasse-t-elle la modernité ?’, p. 41-52, et ‘Du prédicat sans base : entre *mundus* et *baburu*, la modernité’, p. 53-62 in Livia MONNET (ed.) *Approches critiques de la pensée japonaise au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Montreal, Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 2002. On the “meso-logic” of mesology, see my articles « Mesology (風土論) in the light of Yamauchi Tokuryû’s *Logos and lemma* », APF Series 1, *Philosophizing in Asia*, UTCP (The University of Tokyo Center for Philosophy), Uehiro Booklet 3, 2013, p. 9-25, and also, on the blog [mesologiques.fr](http://mesologiques.fr), « La méso-logique des milieux / 環世界と風土の中論的論理 » (december 2013). On the idea that science absolutises S, whereas religion absolutises P, see *La Mésologie...*, *op. cit.*

<sup>60</sup> From Brokmeier’s translation, *Chemins...*, *op. cit.*, p. 69 and 70.

<sup>61</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>62</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>63</sup> Bernard d’ESPAGNAT, *À la recherche du réel. Le regard d’un physicien*, Paris, Dunod, 2015 (1979) ; and *Le réel voilé : analyse des concepts quantiques*, Paris, Fayard, 1994.

Ultimately, the two guises of truth would meet halfway in two opposite processes ; because, whereas the Poem (art) liberates the Earth from its substantial identity and opens it up into new predicative worlds, science dissects the world in order to find the Earth back. And thus advenes, in an indefinitely continuing dispute, moving in a spiral and forever anew, the reality of human milieux (*Umwelten*). That is indeed nothing else than truth, which is historical and, concretely if not abstractly, neither S nor P, but S as P.

That is indeed basically what a physicist like Bernard d'Espagnat also shows when he speaks of “veiled Real” – an almost Heideggerian expression, and in any case a mesological one, since “the Real” is S, which is always “veiled” as P when it becomes a certain reality (S/P). And science proceeds indeed in a way opposite to that of art, since precisely that in which Heidegger sees an ἀ-λήθεια (a de-veiling) is for d'Espagnat a veiling !

### **Conclusion : from dihydrogen monoxyde to water in a landscape**

As a matter of fact, let us acknowledge with Heisenberg that physics does not deal anymore with pure objects, but with the relation that science may have with them ; a relation which, in sum, amounts to the “as” (*als*) of the mesological – both cosmogenetical and ontogenetical – relation “S as P for I”, in other words to Zong Bing's *qu* 趣 and to Heidegger's *Streit* :

“If one may speak of the image of nature according to the exact sciences of our time, one must understand here, rather than the image of nature, the image of our relations with nature. (...) It is above all the network of the relationships of man with nature which is the focus of that science . (...) Science, ceasing to be the spectator of nature, recognizes itself as a part of the reciprocal actions between nature and man. The scientific method , which chooses, explains, arrays, admits the limits which are imposed to it by the fact that employing the method transforms its object, and that, consequently, the method cannot anymore be separated from its object”.<sup>64</sup>

We make out here through what trajective processes – through which mesological journey – purely physical water (dihydrogen monoxyde) can become landscape in a human world. For certain, this journey is not a direct one, and so pure as they may be, the waters of the mountain are not *aqua simplex*. Accomplishing this trajection needed not only all the physico-chemical complexity of a planet, but also the still greater complexity of the biosphere, that biophysical reality without which we would not be alive, and, *last but not least*, the hypercomplexity of the ecumene, which is much more than biophysical only, since, to the ecosystems, it combines the technical systems and the symbolical systems proper to Humankind; that is, the reality of the ecumene – our relationship with the Earth – is eco-techno-symbolical. And since the water which we humans can drink, or understand, or admire in a landscape, is necessarily an ecumenal one, this water, in its *ek-sistence* – its ἀ-λήθεια –, is always infinitely more than the mere *zhi* 質 of H<sub>2</sub>O, or even of an aqueous solution; because it is always real, but always historically to be born (*natura*) in its human reality.

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Born in 1942 in Rabat, a geographer, orientalist and philosopher, Augustin Berque is a director of studies at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (Paris), where he teaches mesology (*Umweltlehre, kansekaigaku* 環世界学) . A member of the Academia europaea, he was in 2009 the

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<sup>64</sup> Werner HEISENBERG, *La nature dans la physique contemporaine*, Paris, Gallimard, 1962 (*Das Naturbild der heutigen Physik*, 1955), p. 33-34.

first Westerner to receive the Fukuoka Grand Prize for Asian cultures. E-mail : [berque@ehess.fr](mailto:berque@ehess.fr) ;  
blog : [mesologiques.fr](http://mesologiques.fr).