

CONTEMPLATION/ENGAGEMENT

Contradictory (but not exclusive) attitudes describing two different ways of experiencing the landscape. Contemplation is connected with the idea of selfless viewing, visual experience, observation and situating oneself outside the landscape; involvement entails an active attitude, multi-sensory experience of the landscape as a process, being in the landscape.

Contemplation is closer to an aesthetic experience and is related to the aesthetic landscape, while engagement is a topographical experience (and therefore geographical and anthropological) and is linked to the cultural landscape.

Contemplation and engagement are also terms referring to different epistemological approaches. Contemplation is linked to traditional epistemology, where the subject and the object remain separate, the observer and the object of observation (contemplation) are clearly defined. The intellectual background of the contemplative attitude is based on the Kantian idea of selflessness, European visucentric approach and the eighteenth-century disputes over the aesthetics of nature, sublimity and picturesqueness. Lowenthal points out that contemplation as a kind of experience stems from the centuries-old European tradition of looking at the landscape as an aesthetic view, to which travel and the development of landscape painting have also contributed. Contemplation as a type of experience means a model of experience in which, by virtue of its theme or composition, the world of nature is perceived as a scene and a view.

Engagement is combined with hermeneutical experience and phenomenological landscape theory, in which there is no clear boundary between the subject and the object of cognition, and the observer is at the same time experiencing cognition. Contemplation as an act of aesthetic perception transforms the view and nature into a landscape, while in the process of engagement the landscape becomes an inhabited place which is subject to natural processes and human activities.

Contemplation of the view and engagement in the landscape correspond to two different types of experience: panoramic look (emphasising the aesthetic dimension of the landscape, the attitude of the wanderer and tourist) and topographic experience (emphasising the processual nature of the landscape, processes related to the movement of people, settlement of new territories, the attitude of the inhabitant). As a consequence, contemplation requires an emotional and physical distance, while engagement requires "entering" the landscape. Contemplation means admiring the views, engagement indicates participation (Rees). To contemplate a view means to experience it in a way that is close to the reception of a work of art. Becoming engaged in the landscape means dealing with nature, with the elements, overcoming them. Engagement in the landscape can also be understood as a bodily immersion, as a result of which man and the landscape form a continuum. From this perspective, the natural landscape of man is the "engagement landscape" and the "observation landscape" (i.e. landscape understood as a view) is a construct created by modern Western culture (Berleant).

Contemplation does not occur where nature is perceived through the prism of its utility values. Emerson notes that we can't enjoy the landscape if people work in a nearby field, Raymond Williams notes that a working village is rarely a landscape, and John Barrell claims that in tourist

destinations and attractive landscapes, workers remain hidden in invisible places so as not to spoil the tourists' philosophical contemplation of the beauty of nature.

Engagement is an attitude that stems from a real identification of problems, an attitude of an inhabitant living in a specific environment, for whom the attitude towards the area, places and surroundings is determined by: utility conditions, memory, attachment, tradition, as well as landscape values. Each attitude sets off a different set of values. Engagement locates our "being" in a specific place, while we contemplate spaces where we remain temporarily, during holidays or hikes in the mountains.

Summarising the aesthetic attitude in the perception of reality, Ritter wrote that in order for nature to transform itself into a landscape, the attitude of a contemplative and uninvolved observer is necessary. This approach is criticised by phenomenologists as not authentic. Representatives of this methodology focus on the ecological condition of the landscape, suitability for settlement, social health and historical authenticity (Lowenthal), and treat any mention of beauty as a distraction from the serious issue of the functioning of landscape and nature. Ingold writes that landscape appears only where there is engagement connected with habitation, which, in his theory, takes the form of a landscape that is inflicted. Assunto adds that as soon as a person starts to feel part of the landscape, they begin to feel part of it and cease to feel like a spectator, they move a reflexive judgment from aesthetics to the level of teleology. In the course of contemplation, the world appears to man as an end in itself and not as an effect of some cause or a means to achieve an end. Action means destroying nature as an object of aesthetic contemplation, i.e. as a landscape.

What unites the two attitudes is, first of all, the fact that they both relate to the relationship between man and space (landscape, nature), both of which also require the presence of the experiencing subject. They can also be treated as complementary if contemplation turns into engagement (a place visited as a tourist becomes the place of residence).

[M. G.]

Literature:

Assunto, Rosario. *La natura come paesaggio e la libertà dell' uomo*. In: *Il paesaggio e l'estetica*, Palermo: Novecento, 2005.

Barrell, John. *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting, 1730-1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Bearlant, Arnold. *Living in the Landscape. Toward the Aesthetics of Environment*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997.

Berleant, Arnold. *The Aesthetics of Environment*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992.

Carlson, Allen. *Nature and Landscape: An Introduction to Environmental Aesthetics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

Cosgrove, Denis. *Vision and Geography. Seeing, Imagining and Representing the World*. London – New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010.

Emerson, Ralph W. *Nature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Frydryczak, Beata, *Krajobraz. Od estetyki the picturesque do doświadczenia topograficznego*,

Poznań: Wydawnictwo PTPN, 2012.

Ingold, Tim. *The Perception of the Environment. Essay of Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London – New York: Routledge, 2000.

Lowenthal, David. *Living With and Looking at Landscape*, "Landscape Research" 5, 2007.

Rees, Ronald. „The Taste for Mountain Scenery”. *History Today* 25 (1975), 305-312.

Ritter, Joachim. *Landschaft: zur Funktion des Ästhetischen in der modernen Gesellschaft*, Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 1963.

Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1973.

