

19. Overcoming Inhuman Perspectives on Nature

Nature as a storehouse of raw materials, as a rubbish dump, or as an amusement park – in any case as an object for the satisfaction of human desires such as hunger, greed, exoticism and domination – the goals and practices associated with these terms shape perspectives on the nature that surrounds us. Yet the unmistakable relationship between inhumane behaviour towards humans and exploitative, destructive behaviour towards nature is rarely addressed. However, if we remember Humboldt, who condemned the simultaneous exploitation of slaves and nature by monocultures, or Carolyn Merchant’s classic “The Death of Nature”¹ about the modern exploitation and oppression of women and nature (I would include also that of slaves), then we recognise the commonalities and interactions between humans and nature in what Humboldt called a cosmos.

From this perspective, inhumanity towards humans can no longer be easily separated from hostile behaviour towards nature. One can speak of indirect inhumanity, in which unintentional climate change causes unintentional heat waves, droughts, floods, migrations and deaths. But one can also speak of inhumanity in a broader sense as harmful behaviour towards nature, where the all-encompassing context of the cosmos is affected. This is a humanistic perspective *à la* Humboldt and Merchant, which is what is meant here when we speak of overcoming inhumane perspectives on nature.

As important as the work and findings of natural scientists in the field of climate are, or the political activities of the “Fridays for Future” movement, they remain very much related to human needs; climate and environmental protection are understood as a means to the end of human well-being and this all the more so with the dwindling experience of the cosmos as a living, emotional space in the course of worldwide urbanisation; this cosmos then only appears in the form of numbers, calculations, statistics and horror images. Flaubert famously described the fact that science as such does not produce meaning in an unfinished satirical novel “Bouvier et Pécuchet” – for Arendt a fitting narrative about the “hopelessness of positivism”².

1 See chapter 20 in this volume: The Encounter of *republic* and *cosmos*: Arendt and Humboldt.
2 1938/10/16, in Hannah Arendt / Heinrich Blücher *Briefe 1936–1968*, Munich Piper 1996, p. 87.

This leads us to the second proposition of this essay, which is that it is indispensable not only to perceive the cosmos as a living organism in its diversity, its modes of appearance and its surprises, but also to perceive it in a living and emotional way. Sober statistics and objective rationality are not capable of this. But not because objective science is emotionless. Rather, its claim to scientific truth conceals the fact that all rational perception is based on prior sensations and feelings, i.e. every rationally treated subject is accompanied by emotional movements and images³, and in most cases has been generated by emotional motives in the first place. Thus, Humboldt's description of the slave and monoculture agriculture is based on images and feelings of inhumanity, Arendt explicitly renounced the *sine ira et studio* principle of scientific objectivity in her analytical description of total domination, and she resorted to the "understanding heart" of the biblical sage Solomon when she dealt with the meaning of reflective judgement.⁴

Overcoming inhuman perspectives on nature therefore requires not only the realisation that this process is always consciously or unconsciously based on sensory imagination and is not possible without it, but that it should also be actively included and cultivated as a means of cognition. In this way, a bridge is built between science and literature and poetry.

In the following, I would like to present both concerns, the cosmic location of man and nature and their emotional grounding, using three different perspectives on nature which point to the unlimited diversity of such perspectives, but at the same time also represent a form of intensification. Firstly, the concept of nature as an acting subject in the literature of the Bohemian writer Adalbert Stifter in the 19th century; secondly, nature as part of an existential space in the poetry of the French poet and resistance fighter René Char, a friend of Albert Camus, in the middle of the 20th century; and thirdly, the concept of the phenomenological landscape, merging 'I' and 'World' according to François Jullien in classical Chinese philosophy.

Nature as an Acting Subject - Adalbert Stifter

Adalbert Stifter (1805–68) grew up in the Bohemian Forest on the western edge of Austria-Hungary. He confronted nature as a natural scientist, as a collector and researcher, but even more as a poet, as an inhabitant of nature. He wrote at the time of late Romanticism, but was not himself a Romantic. His novel "Indian Summer" and his stories reflect Stifter's relationship to nature with its own laws. This relationship

3 Cf. Antonio Damasio: *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*, Putnam, 1994.

4 Hannah Arendt: *Understanding and Politics*, in: *Essays on Understanding 1930–1954*, New York: Harcourt Brace & Company 1994, pp. 307–327.

to nature is based on an aesthetic of the sense of reality, a reverence for small things and, finally, an ethic of innocence towards the environment and fellow world.⁵

Stifter's hero in his novel "*Der Nachsommer*" (St. Martin's Summer) is a naturalist who, thanks to his pronounced sense of reality, is able to experience nature holistically, i.e. scientifically and aesthetically. Again and again, the richly detailed environment of flora and fauna is described in minute detail as a "biocenosis, as a society of plants and animals, as a living totality. However, Stifter also uses the term 'forest' for an economically oriented and managed forest"⁶. This living totality is created by God, but people are responsible for their environment.

Nature now appears not as an object of customary admiration or exploitation, but as an independent subject that surrounds people in the form of a rugged mountain world, with summer thunderstorms or winter sleet, but also with warming rays of sunshine and a balancing, harmonious late summer. Nature is not understood as an object, but as an environment and shared world; it follows its own paths. Animals, meadows and forests are subject to the steady course of their development. The weather can be changeable and dangerous, nature is indifferent to people, it can be as healing as it is deadly.

There, for example, a stream flows in a beautiful silver mirror, a boy falls into it, the water ripples sweetly around his curls, he sinks – and after a while the silver mirror flows again, as before.⁷

In the universe as a whole, the earth occupies a completely insignificant place.

In some of Stifter's texts, border crossers between animal and human appear, tame birds in "Indian Summer", or a "brown girl" in the story "*Katzensilber*" who lives in the forest. She is weather-sensitive and much more precise in her perceptions than the people around her or even meteorological measuring instruments. Here, two systems of knowledge collide, whereby Stifter makes another distinction, that between experience and intuition. Experience cannot exclude erroneous conclusions, while intuition is completely focused on the moment.

Stifter, who actually aspired to a career as a painter, gives this heightened sense of reality its own aesthetic. This aesthetic includes not only the repeated meticulous enumeration of everything there is to see, but above all the changing environment: The thunderstorm clouds in the late afternoon, which no longer threaten but remain in their fullness far away over the mountains; or the heavy snowfall in the mountains, which deprives the children in the story "*Bergkristall*" (Rock Crystal) of all acoustic

5 See more in detail chapter 18 in this volume: Desert and Oasis: Arendt Reads Stifter.

6 Reinhold Erlbeck Die Waldwelt Oberplans zur Zeit Adalbert Stifters, in *LWF aktuell* 116, 2018, p. 21.

7 Adalbert Stifter Abdias, in *Gesammelte Werke in sechs Bänden*, vol. 2, Wiesbaden Insel Verlag 1959, p. 7.

and visual orientation; or the freezing rain, which covers an entire forest and all the houses with a thick layer of ice which even strong trees cannot withstand:

A high-pitched cracking, as it were like a scream, came first, followed by a short wafting, whizzing or streaking, and then the dull, resounding crash, and a mighty trunk lay on the earth. The bang went through the forest like a roar, and through the density of the dampening branches; there was also a ringing and shimmering, as if endless glass was being shifted and shaken – then it was as before.⁸

It is not a scientifically distanced, not a photographically documented reality, but one that is felt existentially according to subjective experience. Such an experience traces the persistence of the storm clouds, feels the complete loss of orientation in the white of the driving snow in its contourless colourlessness and lets us see the freezing rain on skin and trees with a shiver.

Stifter's heightened sense of reality and respect of nature leads him to revere small things. They include flexibility in action instead of strength. Thus, the brown girl in her naturalness had not only intuitively recognised the approaching dangerous hailstorm, but also knew what protected against it: "What resisted was crushed, what was solid was shattered, what had life was killed. Only soft things resisted, the earth beaten by the hailstones or the brushwood bundles"⁹, said Stifter, indirectly recalling Daoism. Great is the natural rhythm, not the spectacular.¹⁰ "All greatness", Stifter wrote to his publisher, "is simple and gentle, just as the building of the world is."¹¹ Consequently "there is nothing great and nothing small. The structure of the little animal, hardly visible to human eyes, is admirable and immeasurably large; the simple roundness of Sirius is small."¹² The resulting "reverence for things as they are in themselves" is action-guiding.

Finally, the ethics of innocence in the human relationship to the environment and the world around us, which dominates Stifter's sense of reality and is based on reverence for small things, does not exhibit any pre-established harmony. On the contrary, natural catastrophes, snowfall, snowstorms, sleet and outbreaks of plague occur, all of them catastrophic events, each of which corresponds to violent disturbances in interpersonal relationships, such as in "*Bergkristall*" the estrangement of the inhabitants of two hostile villages, who find their way back to each other through the rescue of the two children.

Stifter wants to appease the destructive side of nature through cultivation and to subject this act of cultivation itself to a supposed natural law; cultivation of na-

8 Adalbert Stifter Die Mappe meines Urgrossvaters, in *ibid.*, vol. p. 541.

9 Adalbert Stifter, *Katzensilber*, *ibid.*, p. 263.

10 Adalbert Stifter *Gesammelte Werke in sechs Bänden*, *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 7.

11 Letter to Heckenast, July 1847, in Adalbert Stifter *Briefe*, Tübingen Wunderlich 1936, p. 96.

12 Letter to Friedrich Eulemann, 3 February 1854, *ibid.*, p. 149f.

ture goes hand in hand with a naturalisation of culture.¹³ It is the late summer in which nature is moderated, “the thunderstorms and the heat have ceased, but a mild warmth and delicate transparency place all objects pure and calm before us, clarified and prepared, so that one day the approaching winter will take them up into its shell, which for us may mean death and departure from this earth”.¹⁴ And it is the “simplicity, greatness and goodness of the human soul”¹⁵ that makes the naturalisation of culture possible, which applies not only to individuals but also to society and politics, laws and norms of existence and coexistence.

Nature as Part of an Existential Space – René Char

The relationship between man and nature in René Char’s poetry appears quite differently, as an existential space in the face of the threat of modernity and totalitarianism. René Char (1907–88) grew up in the south of France near Mont Ventoux, made famous by Petrarch. He belonged to the Surrealists in Paris in the 1920s like André Breton and Paul Eluard, broke away from them in the 1930s/1940s because of their unseriousness in the face of totalitarian movements, returned to the south of France, turned his attention to the language of ordinary people. He acted there as a leading regional resistance fighter in the *maquis* during the German occupation, became friends with Albert Camus in a great agreement on political and poetic questions, and took part in protest movements against the stationing of nuclear weapons and the destruction of the environment in Southern France in the 1950s and 1960s. Char was friends with the painters Nicolas de Staël and Joan Miró, artists such as Picasso, Juan Gris, Henri Matisse, and Georges Braque illustrated his poems, and Pierre Boulez set one of his plays to music. Rimbaud and the painter Georges de la Tour inspired him. He is considered the most important French poet of the 20th century.

Char’s poetry is extremely hermetic, initially influenced by the role of the dream and the subconscious in surrealism against instrumental rationalism, and later he was increasingly interested in condensing thoughts into aphorisms, often in the form of fragments, islands of words. During the Second World War he wrote down political-poetic observations, which Camus published after the war under the title “Hypnos: Notes from the Maquis (1943–1944)” and which Paul Celan translated into German. From these notes, Arendt quoted the aphorism “Our inheritance is not preceded by any testament” when dealing with the spirit of revolution.

13 Christian Begemann / Davide Giuriato (eds.) *Stifter-Handbuch, Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, Stuttgart J P. Metzler Verlag 2017, p. 73.

14 Letter to Gustav Heckenast, 12 June 1856, in: *Briefe*, *ibid.*, p. 178.

15 Letter to Gustav Heckenast, 16 February 1847, in: *Briefe*, *ibid.*, p. 89f.

Maquis, nature and myth form the existential space for Char, to which he gives a poetic language and thus creates meaning. The *maquis* as an incisive life experience, as a natural environment, home, and place of resistance; nature as an environment that guides and confronts us, in the form of day and night, sky and earth, the seasons, plants and animals, as a protective space; myth, finally, as a transcendental foundation of meaning for existence in this space.

Char looks at the world through the eyes of Heraclitean dialectics, not in the Hegelian sense but rather the Asian one, and allows the interplay of the elements, the reconciled opposites, to appear in their common presence. The poem “The Shark and the Seagull”, for example, “centres on the opposition of duration and departure, of heaviness and lightness, of diving into the sea and flying”¹⁶.

The core of Char’s attitude to life is the intellectual and practical revolt as a permanent ethical requirement. This revolt is accompanied by a stoic attitude. In “Hypnos” he notes:

To be stoic is to freeze, to freeze with the beautiful eyes of Narcissus. We calculated the pain that the executioner could extract from every inch of our bodies; then we went, pressed heart, and stood against it.¹⁷

This stoic revolt is not utopian or nihilistic, but filled with tragic optimism, which is also characteristic of Camus, whose relationship to Char I will discuss later.

The poetic actor, the rebel, Char himself, appears in his poetry as heart, lightning and bird; the heart and not the head as the source of energy and as the essence of the human being, and the lightning as the energy of knowledge, which in the intensification of the aphorism of Heraclitus on lightning as the helmsman of the universe appears again and again in Char’s poetry, as condensed in the following sentence:

When we inhabit a flash of lightning, it is the heart of eternity.¹⁸

This expresses, according to one commentator, the “most vivid contradiction and at the same time the most perfect moment”¹⁹.

Finally, Char mentions some thirty different varieties of birds, but it is above all the swift that embodies the rebel; it is like the heart. The poem “The Swift” reads:

Swift with wings too wide, wheeling and shrieking his joy as he circles the house.
Such is the heart.

16 Horst Wernicke “Dieser Rauch, der uns trug ...” René Char Dichtung und Widerstand, in René Char, *Einen Blitz bewohnen. Gedichte*, Frankfurt/M. S. Fischer Verlag 1995, p. 147. (All quotations translated by WH)

17 René Char *Hypnos. Aufzeichnungen aus dem Maquis 1943–1944*, Frankfurt/M. S. Fischer Verlag, p. 9f.

18 René Char *Einen Blitz bewohnen, Gedichte*, *ibid.*, p. 45.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 148.

He dries up thunder. He sows in the serene sky. If he touches the ground, he tears himself apart.

His opposite is the swallow, the familiar, whom he detests. What value has: lace from the tower?

He rests in the most sombre hollow. No one lives in space narrower than he.

Through the summer of long brightness, he will streak his way in shadows, through the window blinds of midnight.

No eyes can hold him. He shrieks for his only presence. The smallest rifle shoots him down.

Such is the heart.²⁰

Thus, Stoic revolt, tragic optimism and the actor's heart, lightning and birds form the foundations of the existential space lined with the experiences of the *maquis*, the environment of nature and the cloak of myth.

The *maquis* is the site of the experience of contradictions sharpened to the extreme, of freedom and slavery, life and death, loyalty and betrayal, night and morning, visibility, and concealment. Like Nietzsche, Char sees in this space a unity of ethics and human/non-human nature, here integrity and honesty prove themselves against collaboration and betrayal. No tradition has the necessary knowledge to act, it requires survival skills, the desire, as a drive, and the dawn of departure: "... belong to the leap. Not to its epilogue, the revelry"²¹, "to extend the momentum of the great road, or what one considers to be it, into insatiable wanderings, that is the task of the wanderer into the morning."²² Char had pinned a colour reproduction of Georges de la Tour's painting "The Prisoner" on the wall in one of the resistance group's rooms, showing a nun stroking the forehead of a huddled prisoner in the warming glow of her candle. "The more time passes," Char wrote in 'Hypnos', "the more it seems to reflect its meaning back on our situation ... Not a single resistance fighter who has walked through the door in the past two years has not burned his eyes on the evidence of this candle."²³

No wonder Char detested the world of post-totalitarian "strategists" after this experience:

We are partisans, after the conflagration to extinguish the traces, to wall up the labyrinth and to raise civic responsibility. The strategists are not partisans, they are the plague of this world and its bad breath.²⁴

20 René Char *Zorn und Geheimnis, Gedichte*, Frankfurt/M. S. Fischer Verlag 1991, p. 139f.

21 René Char: *Hypnos*, op. cit., p. 77.

22 René Char *Die Bibliothek in Flammen und andere Gedichte*, Frankfurt/M. S. Fischer Verlag 1992, p. 79.

23 René Char: *Hypnos*, *ibid.*, p. 71.

24 René Char: Bilets à Francis Curel, in: *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris: Gallimard 1983, p. 637.

The second element of Char's existential space, *nature*, corresponds with the maquis experience, the detailed knowledge of flora and fauna, the interplay of the high granite mountains and the untamed river. Char admires the animals, the swift flying round the tower, the bull as a fighter in a lost cause, the trout as a victim of industrialisation, the snake because it is cursed, and the larch tree because it strives towards the light.²⁵ All natural phenomena are part of human existence: the shelter of the night, the darkness at noon in the Mediterranean summer sun, or the lightning already mentioned. The landscape is saved in the poem from environmental destruction.

Finally, the third element, myth, is narrative and sense-making. Myth in Char is cosmic and the heritage of classical Greece. There is Hypnos, the Greek god of sleep, who watches over sleep, protects the night, enables the invisibility of resistance, of revolt, who gives energy and is energy:

Hypnos seized winter and clothed it in granite. Winter became sleep, Hypnos became fire. The rest is up to the human being.²⁶

For Char we are meteors, "a watch our sky, a hunt our run, a drop of brightness what we chase"²⁷. There "may my presence, which excites mysterious unease, implacable hatred in you, be meteor in your soul."²⁸ Finally, there is the constellation of Orion as the other side of Hypnos, the most luminous and powerful group of stars in the winter firmament, equal to the gods Osiris in Egypt and Nimrod in Assyria.²⁹

Char found a close friend in Camus, who would not have written *The Rebel* without the poet's tragic optimism. "I wanted this book to be OURS", Camus wrote to Char, "and without you it could never have been a book of hope."³⁰ "Nazi Germany," he wrote, "had no more determined opponent or more generous enemy than a great French poet, René Char, in whose work you will find today as tomorrow the faithful mirror of a free and proud virtue whose memory sustains us."³¹ And Char, for his part, wrote: "Camus was a good and profound man by the grace of this goodness, of an absolute clarity in friendship, without real intellectual ice, modest, close, under all sorts of playfulness, to those deprived of sovereign moods."³² Char's poetry, Camus declared, "flared up like those great brush fires that in the poet's homeland give

25 Jean Voellmy "Orte, wo wir niederknien um zu trinken". Die Provence im Werk René Chars, in René Char *Einen Blitz bewohnen*, *ibid.*, p. 113.

26 René Char: *Hypnos*, *ibid.*, p. 7.

27 René Char: *ibid.*, p. 117.

28 René Char *Die Bibliothek in Flammen*, *ibid.*, p.131.

29 Horst Wernicke "Dieser Rauch, der uns trug ...", *ibid.*, p. 175. See also Manfred Bauschulte *René Char. Poet und Partisan. Eine Biographie*, Vienna 2017, pp. 208–212, 213–227.

30 Albert Camus / René Char: *Correspondance 1946–1959*, Paris: Gallimard 2007, p. 86.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 124.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 173.

fragrance to the wind and nourishment to the earth. We breathed a sigh of relief at last. The mystery of nature, the living waters, the light broke into the room where poetry had hitherto delighted in shadows and echoes. ... Here, in full battle, a poet has dared to call out to us: 'In our darkness, beauty has not one place in it. All the place is allotted to it, to beauty.'³³

Char's world is cosmic, but unlike Humboldt's harmonious view, it is out of balance; it needs the partisan, the ethical agent, the protective light of humanity and conviviality with the forces of nature.

Phenomenology of Landscape – François Jullien

The third part of this essay brings together the subjectivisation of nature in Stifter and the existential human-nature space in Char in a correlation of 'I' and 'World' as offered by classical Chinese philosophy. I draw here on François Jullien's work "Living on Landscape or the Unthought of Reason"³⁴.

Turning to the Chinese philosophy of landscape reveals three prejudices of the European concept of landscape: first, it is merely part of the whole, of nature; second, it is subject to a primarily visual perception; and third, it is entirely the object of subjective observation. It is clear that a landscape understood in this way, whose concept has only existed in Europe since the Renaissance, appears against the background of the modern division between subject and object, reason and feeling, and activity and passivity. It is evaluated, classified and analysed aesthetically and in terms of its form.

The Chinese concept of landscape is quite different. The Chinese word for landscape "mountain-water" expresses the usual pairing, a combination of different terms instead of their logical demarcation, so that the correlation, here between mountain and water, seeing and hearing, is in the foreground. Nature appears as interaction. There is no fixed position of the observer – but rather reciprocal positions are taken. Landscape is not observed, but one allows oneself to be absorbed by it, whereby the world unfolds.

Landscape grows through what it mobilises in us. It is not a decoration, but brings about a renewal of life by anchoring us in it; it is not a mimesis of a representation of typical manifestations, but evokes the vital; it is not beautiful, but alive; and it is not an object of mere perception, but part of an intense exchange.

33 Albert Camus / René Char In René Char *Draußen die Nacht wird regiert. Poesien*, Frankfurt/M. S. Fischer Verlag 1986, p. 200.

34 François Jullien *Von Landschaft leben oder das Ungedachte der Vernunft*, Berlin Matthes & Seitz 2016.

Landscape therefore appears when the perceptive is at the same time the affective, when it touches us in our inner being and is thus a resource. The perceptive/affective is the opposite of passion: the perceptive grows out of perception, while the affective leads to being attuned.

Both are the common origin of 'I' and 'World' and form the sensual, the 'spirit' of the landscape. In order to arrive at such an understanding, it is necessary to de-psychologise and de-subjectivise this understanding. The spiritual takes place in a space of contrasts, it operates in the here and now, but is permeated by the beyond. Terms like ambience, atmosphere and aura, shunned in the West because of their vagueness, permeate this idea of landscape.

Landscape is tension, not order and harmony; it becomes boring when the tension fades. It is singular, something special, but not extreme or rare, it is its own, and it makes existence appear as individuation. It is variation, not repetition, and it consists of the far-away. Landscape is characterised by spacing and an in-between, by distance, not contrast or variety, but variation. The far-away adds a welcome imprecision to distance, it is the place between being and non-being, of dreams, of the lack of limitation by horizons, of infinite depth. It is the starting point for meditation, the expansion of inner boundaries and an art of living as a strategy emerging directly from the landscape to free the world from its inertia.

Landscape has nothing to do with a "harmony with nature", which is still based on the subject-object split and therefore tends towards romanticism or irrationalism. Rather, there is landscape when my capacity for knowledge "tips over" into a sense of understanding or a silent agreement³⁵, when knowledge becomes an inner understanding, when we move from science, which makes us know, to poetry, which makes us understand, which in this way tells me something about landscape, touches me. The opposition between reason and passion is cancelled out. In this intimacy we are in the world, rather than in contemplative observation of contexts, we are involved in coherence. Like Zhuangzi and Mengzi, the 16th-century thinker Wang Yangming declared that the I and the World emerged simultaneously, "that all human beings form one being" and that anyone who distinguished between the Thou and the I was a good-for-nothing and endangered not only all humanity but also the world of animals and plants.³⁶

Jullien concludes by saying that we must seek a way out of the alternative of treating the world mechanically and economically or nostalgically as a lost paradise, and he surprisingly pleads for landscape to be understood as "the whole of the world", therefore also as a global local, therefore also in a world of megacities. What counts, he argues, are the numerous polarities "that put the world area in tension and save it from the uni-formation that threatens it, condemns it to atony out of boredom,

35 Ibid., p. 184.

36 Ibid., p. 202.

and finally consigns it to indifference.”³⁷ The relationship between humankind and nature cannot be separated from the relationship between the members of the humankind themselves.

Stifter, Char and Jullien contrast the inhumanity of the human perspective on nature, which Humboldt described as the simultaneity of the exploitation of nature and humans, with the respect for humans and nature in their mutual coexistence. They change the perspective from subjectivity to an intersubjective reciprocal relationship between nature and humans: Stifter with a nature as humanised subject and the subjects as exposed to this nature, Char (and with him Camus) with a rebelling human and natural life-world, and Jullien with the mutually complementary elements. They reject Hegel’s logic and dialectic as alien to them.

All three describe a perceptive that goes hand in hand with the affective – moods, beauty and sublimity, the inherent life and interplay of matter, atmosphere, flora and fauna. Not romantically transfiguring, but as an existential world in which the relationships between inside and outside strive for a balance that likewise brings *emotio* and *ratio* into productive equilibrium. With Stifter this is in the form of occasionally threatening but not annihilating situations, with Char in the form of a unity in myth, and with Jullien in the form of a Daoist serenity. This results in a new world of conscious living in and with nature, of perception, respect and a perspective that no longer looks at the cosmos from human beings, but from the cosmos, the common of human beings and nature.

This interplay of phenomena can be experienced and described but is difficult to define if one wants to dispense with the use of specific concepts and the accompanying danger of simplifications, abstractions and possible inhumanisation. From here it is necessary to think further, or better to look further. The example of “mountain-water” uses terms that open up a non-conceptual space of the former “landscape”. We could continue this line of thought: what do we see when we say “cosmos”, but also what do we see when we say “nature”, or when we say “human being”?

Written in 2021. First published in this volume.

37 Ibid., p. 213.

