

A VIEWPOINT ON PAINTING? ON A PROBLEMATIC THEORY OF COMPUTATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Preface

It would be an inevitable condition of our philosophy and aesthetics to accept that after the linguistic turn and postmodern philosophy of the twentieth century, the traditional essentialist thinking has finally broken down. It is this 'essentialism' that adheres to the existence of a super-historical or a-historical principle, i.e. an absolute truth beyond our history in various realms, such as the religious, the political, the cultural, etc. This fanatical essentialist thinking has a negative aspect because through this thinking, violence against people who don't want to share the same opinion, often occurs. Nor is this matter different in the case of art. As soon as it is understood and explained from the framework of essentialist thinking, it easily falls victim to the essentialist discourse. It seems that even now, art is not only theoretically, but also practically bound to such a framework of essentialism.

Concerning this problem, the philosophical thought of Kiyoshi Miki (1897–1945) can give us a good suggestion as how to reconsider our experience in the holistic sense, i.e. beyond the philosophy in the narrow sense of the discipline. Miki didn't use the notion of 'essentialism'. In the 1930s he had, however, already criticized the philosophical thought which we can call 'essentialist' and proposed a new philosophical thinking.

In this paper, I would like to point out the actuality of Miki's thinking (*Part I*),¹ and then, from Miki's view, critically reexamine the discourse on painting in Japan and Eastern Asia. In this discourse we shall find an aspect of the essentialist understanding of art which has been for a long time strongly bound to the western theory of perspective after the Renaissance and photographic theory. I would like to try to clarify the problematic under-

¹ See also Iwaki 2001b.

standing of painting which computational psychology has developed.² Most of all, the psychological explanation of 'depth', which we see in pictures, is a stumbling block to an understanding of the peculiarity of pre-modern and non-western pictures. This explanation, which had obtained its plausibility from the tradition of geometric perspective and photography has, however, provided the fixed framework of pictorial theories. It seems to have become a 'common sense' for many people and an 'essential' framework of art theories. Is this essentialist understanding of painting really correct? Hasn't it overlooked the individual structures of many pictures and reduced them to a single criterion? This, then, is our question (*Part 2*).

Part 1. Miki's Philosophical Thinking and its Actuality

Concerning Miki's critique of the essentialist thinking, his "Rekishu Tetsugaku" ("Philosophy of History," 1932) and *Kousoryoku no Ronri (Logic of Imagination, Logik der Einbildungskraft, 1937-43)* are the most important among his many writings. Regarding his critique of essentialism, the most suggestive concepts (notions) which Miki emphasized are the notions of 'fact' (*Tatsache*), 'pathos', 'social body', critique of the philosophical 'standpoint of organism', 'institution' and 'myth'.

1-1. 'Fact' (Tatsache)

In his "Philosophy of History", Miki proposes to explain history from the viewpoint of 'fact'. According to Miki, we can generally find two aspects of history, that is 'the history as logos' and 'the history as being'. The former is the past world which was known and ordered in our consciousness. Historical texts, novels, or diaries for instance, show direct expressions of it. 'The history as logos' is 'a subjective aspect of history'. 'The history as being' designates the past world as a whole, and is thus an 'objective aspect of history'. Behind the past which we are conscious of,

the vast unconscious past world remains as 'the history of being'. In this sense, 'the history as being' antedates 'the history as logos'. However, we should at the same time know that we can assume the 'history of being',

² Concerning the 'computational psychology', cf. Akifumi Tokuzumi, *Kokoro no Keisanron (Computational Theory of Mind)*. Tokyo-Daigaku-Shuppankai (Tokyo University Press), Tokyo, 1991. This psychology belongs to the traditional 'experimental psychology' and tries to explain the process of our competences (mind, perception, language etc.) starting from the computational system, which consists of three steps, 'input-process-output' of information.

i.e. a hidden dimension of history, when an aspect of it can just surface and appear to our consciousness ('the history as logos'). 'The history of being' is the history which has yet to become explicit and is illuminated in due course as dependent on our logos. It is the potential dimension for our historical consciousness. As Miki suggests, all historical sources intermediately stand between the subjective and the objective in history. Through finding a new historical source or changing our interpretation on the given historical sources, 'the new history as logos' is innovated and we obtain a new view on history. Through such a paradigm shift of 'the history as logos', a new aspect of 'the history as being' comes into our view and our understanding of the past world is changed.

Miki also emphasizes the significance of 'the present' because our description of history is not a simple objective representation of the past (this would be impossible), but is an act of 'pulling' the past sources up to our 'present' through their selection. In order to describe history, we need a perspective to the past world as a whole, granted that it is tentative. In other words, description of history means the setting of our present perspective to the past. Miki distinguishes the notion of the 'present' from the 'modern' or the 'contemporary'. 'Present' is an original notion in the philosophy of history. Only from the perspective of 'present', can we talk about the peculiar meaning of the 'modern' or 'contemporary' world as a period different from others (PH, Chapter 1).

Every 'moment' in the 'history as being' has a crucial meaning as 'present' because from the perspective of every 'present' as a 'moment', the past world has been understood, constructed or reconstructed each time.³ Therefore, we cannot separate 'the history as being' from 'the history as logos'. These two aspects are intertwining in history. This dynamic field of history in which 'the history of being' and 'the history of logos' have their origin, is 'the history as fact' (*Tatsache*). Miki also called it 'the *primordial* history' (*Ur-Geschichte*). Miki proposes to interpret this dynamic movement of history as 'dialectic', which was a popular notion of his day. Human beings irresistibly live in the 'present', we are involved in 'the history as fact' and responding to it from the view of each 'present' (PH, Chapter 1, Section 2).

In Miki's concept of the philosophy of history, the actions of human beings play a prominent role. History takes its shape through our active response to the past, selecting and drawing out some aspects of it. We have to know that history is a product of our 'decision' (*Ent-scheidung* [= decision and section = *Scheidung*]). Even if we are unconscious of it, we live with ex-

³ On the notion of 'moment', cf. PH, pp. 30 and 164.

pectations of our future and with actions through the selection of something from the past. The selective action in this case is not determined beforehand, but depends on 'freedom', because 'decision' can be possible only because of free will. We thus cannot explain 'the history as fact' by any causality.⁴

'The history as fact' is not only the theoretical, but also 'the sensuous' and 'the physical' because with all our sensuous organs and bodies we renovate and innovate it. We are being involved in it. 'The history as fact' is the world of 'things' which we have actively produced and by which we are bodily surrounded.

The reason why Miki pretends to use the notion of 'fact' (*Tatsache*) is that he keeps Fichte's notion of 'act' (*Tathandlung*) in mind. According to his *Theory of Science (Wissenschaftslehre, 1794)*, which followed and developed the Kantian notion of 'I' (*Ich*), Fichte insisted that the original nature of 'I' is action (*Handlung*) as the 'self's absolute activity'. This originally active self reflects upon its 'self-consciousness' through the results of its own actions. In the self-consciousness of 'I', action (*Handlung*) of 'I' and its result (*Tat*) are always combined. This inseparable relation is the transcendental condition of 'I' which Fichte calls 'act' (*Tathandlung*).

Against this notion of 'act', Miki brings forth the notion of 'fact' (*Tat-Sache*) because he thinks that our 'self' cannot be reduced to the personal self-consciousness.⁵ But our 'self' is also understood as a bodily and a sensuous being, always related to things which were made by its actions and those of others. In this sense, 'I' is never the closed being, but the being which has originally been opened to the outside of itself. Miki was thus attracted by the notion of 'pathos' in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807).

1-2. 'Pathos' and 'Social Body'

Sociality and historicity have originally penetrated into our feelings because feelings are involved in 'the history as fact'. Our acts, carried out by our proper feelings, such as love or hate, have already been mediated by social conditions. Passion which has been penetrated by such sociality is called 'pathos'. Hegel separated this 'pathos' (*Pathos*) from the simple personal passion (*Leidenschaft*). In this context of Hegel's reception, we find Miki's notion of 'social body'.

⁴ It is tangible that Miki referred here to Heidegger's understanding of 'history' (*Geschichte*) in *Sein und Zeit* (1927). Cf. PH, pp. 44 and 168. Before the publication of *Sein und Zeit*, in 1923-24, Miki had visited Heidegger in Marburg and studied his early thought. It is interesting to note that Heidegger introduced him to H.-G. Gadamer.

⁵ Miki separated 'Tat' and 'Sache' in order to stress the difference between two compounds, 'Tat-Handlung' and 'Tat-Sache'.

In our understanding [of Hegel's text] passion (*Leidenschaft*) relates to the personal body, while pathos relates to the social body. [...] In every historical act, the personal and the social are inseparably connected in our body. The body includes a personal and a social aspect in itself (PH, p. 42).

Miki obviously takes the philosophical position which reduces the human experience neither to the individual nor the society. Instead, he tries to grasp them in their mutual dynamic relation ('dialectic') between the individual and the society. We can say that he already has been freed from essentialist thinking.

In the context of his introduction of 'pathos', the notion of 'destiny' (*Schicksal*) in Hegel's philosophy is also referred to. Miki appreciates Hegel, who called destiny 'pathos', because the meaning of 'incident' (*pathema*) is also implicated in the Greek notion of 'pathos'. This implication accentuates the peculiar meaning of 'pathos' compared to the simple passion. 'Pathos' is the passion which is fatally conducted and carried by the historical incident (see PH, p. 43). Seeing the function of 'destiny' in 'the history as fact', tells us that history is never explained by any causality. We live in 'the history as fact' through our selection and decision of the past and the future, as being driven by 'pathos' beyond our consciousness. So, the incidentally selected or the not selected will act upon us in the future as a destiny to be taken upon ourselves. 'Incidence' is 'necessity' at the same time. Therefore, the recognition of 'incidence' or the inseparable relation between 'incidence' and 'necessity' takes us to a crucial point when we consider human experiences and history.

Miki says that,

destiny and the law of causality are mutually exclusive because destiny implicates a certain incident which is never explained by causality. However, the simple incident isn't the necessity yet. The notion of destiny activates itself in a condition in which an incident also implicates a necessity. ... Incidence plays a much more important role than necessity [in the history as fact]. (*Ibid.*, p. 43.)

The experience of 'the history as fact' is the 'original experience' (*ibid.*, p. 48). 'The history as fact' can be called the 'historical and social environment' which we cannot observe from outside of it.⁶ From this viewpoint, traditional philosophy is criticized as the theory of 'organism'.

⁶ On 'environment', cf. PH 2, Chapter 2, Section 2. Miki's teacher Nishida had also dealt with 'environment' as an important notion for philosophy of history.

1-3. Miki's Critique of the 'Theory of Organism'

According to Miki, the philosophy of Aristotle, of German romanticism of the nineteenth century, especially Schelling, and German hermeneutics since Dilthey, all share the 'theory of organism' in the long tradition of western philosophy. Miki criticizes an aspect of this tradition, which tends to explain the historical world from the viewpoint of the organism. In this long tradition, history has been taken as a 'continuous' and a 'necessary' development from potentiality (*dynamis*) to actuality (*energeia*). The development of history is interpreted as a similar process of the organic nature (birth-growth-aging-death). This traditional thinking and common belief have become deeply rooted in our general apprehension.

Miki questions this deep-rooted common sense. His term, 'contemplative stance', characterizes the theory of organism. One could take the stance which explains the history and the human being from the viewpoint of 'organism', when he/she assumes that outside of history or beyond it, he/she could contemplate (=survey) history as 'a closed whole'. Following this approach, all that a human being makes, i.e. history, society, nation, etc., is taken as an artwork which necessarily integrates its every part into an organic whole. Miki claims that the traditional philosophical theory of 'organism' takes a 'position of [classical] aesthetics'. As long as we retain this thinking, the lives of human beings and also history are understood from the viewpoint of the previously discussed whole (in Miki's terminology, from the viewpoint of the 'teleology with a determined goal'). We thus are not aware that human beings are open to the future. Miki calls the 'stance of contemplative thinking' also a 'stance of understanding'. This is the idealistic stance which holds to the 'idea of a closed whole'. According to this stance, our history has already been given and concluded in advance. Indeed, we should assume the whole when we want to rightly understand something. But if we would assume it to be a fixed whole, the process of history and human life would have to be taken as a necessary and inevitable step to the given goal, and therefore, the possibility of our freedom would be excluded.

At first sight, this lasting idea of 'organism' appears to emphasize a beautiful harmony between a whole and its parts. Within this idea, however, an aspect which negates our freedom is hidden. In other words, this idea leads to a social determinism which insists that the experiences of human beings are historically and socially determined in advance. Miki has acknowledged this dangerous aspect of the theory of organism.⁷

⁷ Also today 'social determinism' is dominant in terms of 'contextualist' thinking. Junichi Murata pointed out the problem of 'foundationalism of technology' and of 'so-

Miki developed his critique on the theory of ‘organism’ in his reviews of literature of his time. We can find it in his article “History and critique in the classics” (1937), in which German literature from the end of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century is critically discussed.⁸ His critique of E. Bertram, A. Saur and J. Nadler is especially notable. Bertram turned his attention to Nietzsche’s thought of the ‘superhuman’ (*Übermensch*) in his interpretation of Nietzsche’s philosophy and emphasized the role of the individual who shoulders the destiny of his nation and era. According to Miki, Bertram’s reception of Nietzsche is an ‘aristocratic’ one and a ‘worship of the hero’ (Vol. 11, p. 376). Saur and Nadler, contrariwise, developed the history of literature from the viewpoint of race and emphasized the ‘tradition of blood[relation]’ (p. 382). These two concepts are apparently opposed to each other. Although in the former the originality of genius was stressed, and in the latter the anonymous local folklores, they both shared the same concept, that of ‘organism’, according to which history was regarded as an organic whole.

Through this literary theory, Miki actually criticized the German ideological tendencies of his time, one of which was the heroism concocted by Nazism (the cult of Hitler) and the other of which was racism.⁹ When we become aware that Miki wrote this article in 1937, his literary criticism becomes a more profound critique of his time. In the Japan of those days, ‘Nihonshugi’ (Japanism = Japanese nationalism), which urged the revival of ‘blood and soil’, i.e. a revival and accentuation of Japanese nationalist tradition, was strongly advocated.

1937 was the year in which Japan began its second invasion into China and rushed headlong toward World War II. Miki’s writings, ranging from the “Philosophy of History” to his literary reviews, reflected upon the crisis of Japan. Crisis was the ‘the history as fact’ of Japan in those days. ‘Myth’ and ‘institution’, of which Miki wrote from 1937 to 1938 in his *Logic of Imagination*, should be read in this context.¹⁰

1-4. ‘Myth’ and ‘Institution’

At the time of “Philosophy of History”, Miki had already learned with the help of Marxist and Heidegger’s philosophies that the human being isn’t

cial determinism’ and proposed the ‘flexibility of our interpretation’. Cf. Murata’s two articles, 1999.

⁸ Miki, Vol. 11, p. 457.

⁹ Georg Lukács, who had left Germany, strongly criticized Bertram’s ideological understanding of Nietzsche in 1937. (See Iwaki 2001b).

¹⁰ On Miki’s approach to ‘myth’ and ‘institution’, see Iwaki 2001b. In this essay I summarize the applicable part of this article.

only a conscious being, but also a sensuous and a physical one, and that the human body is a 'social body'. This became Miki's basic position.

Miki's thinking has yet another aspect, namely that the human being is taken as an 'expressive being'. Miki took this idea from his teacher, Nishida Kitaro, who had developed it in his youth. He called it then the 'active subject', and in his later period, an 'active intuition'.¹¹ Inheriting this notion of Nishida's, Miki proclaimed in the preface to his *Logic of Imagination* (1939), that he took the standpoint of 'active intuition' (LI, p. 8). Together with the notions of 'expression', *poiesis* and 'action', emphasizing the role of 'feeling' in human beings basically characterizes the philosophy of Nishida. Nishida thought that the experience of the human being consists of a structure with three stages, namely 'knowledge', 'will', and 'feeling', and he took 'feeling' to be the deepest stage. He called this stage 'nothingness', that which no knowledge can reach. It is the origin from which knowledge is first born. Miki's understanding of the relationship between 'logos' and 'pathos' was derived from this concept of Nishida's. Miki developed the basis of his theory of 'myth and 'institution' on the basis of Nishida's idea.

It is the peculiarity of 'institution' that it is a 'fiction' (idea) set in a society. Miki tried to grasp the origin of the 'institution'. Only when an 'institution' as 'fiction' comes into force in the minds and feelings of the people – when it is not only a theoretical knowledge, but also takes root in the common belief of the people – it can obtain its reality in a society as 'institution'. Miki pointed out this original structure of 'institution'. Through 'custom', the 'institution' as 'fiction' (the ideal) becomes the real and natural framework of feeling ('pathos') in people. Therefore, 'institution' is not only 'the logical' (ideal). When it penetrates into the 'pathos' of the people, it transcends every personal consciousness and becomes 'the collective' and 'the authoritative' (p. 99). Miki clarified the process in which 'institution' becomes 'second nature' to us, as a matter of the concrete structure of our consciousness. The establishment of 'institution' means that a 'fiction' gradually changes into the natural of the consciousness, i.e. 'myth' in a society (p. 135). 'Institution in a society implicates a certain sense of myth' (p. 28).

The logic of 'institution' cannot be grasped in the dimension of theory because it has already been 'the logic of feeling' and 'the logic of imagination' (*Logik der Einbildungskraft*). It is 'the psychological before the logical'. Miki argued that such psychological powers of 'myth' are at work not only in the ancient worlds, but everywhere. 'Myth' is an expression of 'the sense of solidarity' (p. 24) and should therefore be understood 'not from the view of

¹¹ On this notion of Nishida, see Iwaki 1998.

idea, but from the view of image', which is 'unity of logos and pathos' (p. 75). 'Myth' is a product of the imagination which is acting upon, and penetrating into, pathos. It is a product of the 'collective presentation which tends to keep its custom, institution and tradition' (p. 96). Precisely because 'myth' is a product of the imagination which has roots more deeply in pathos than in knowledge, it always keeps its deep and incorrigible power. It cannot be gotten rid of simply by theory.

From the standpoint of 'the logic of imagination', Miki grasps 'myth' and 'institution' as an inseparable interpenetration of 'logos' and 'pathos'. Because history can never be reduced to a simple causality, it has to be understood in the complicated interpenetration of logos and pathos, in which also body and feeling are involved. Miki wrote in his "Ideology and Pathology" (1933) that our 'research of the consciousness' should not end in the theory of ideology, but should break through to the research of pathos, i.e. 'pathology'. His intent was to clarify the structure of the ideology which has penetrated into the pathos of people. According to Miki, 'pathology' is a philosophical theory in the sense that it 'urges us to a reflection on our situation of today' (Vol. 11, p. 213).

Following Nishida's concept of history, Miki turned his attention to the power of unconscious 'pathos' in history, and from this viewpoint attempted to develop his philosophy of history, society, and literature. Miki, however, did not reduce human experience to pathos, but kept the inseparable relationship between logos and pathos in mind. We thus cannot identify his thought with mythologizing romanticism. Also in his *Logic of Imagination* Miki criticized Bertram's 'mythical idea of the history' (p. 58). Miki did not admire myth, but, rather, the analysis of its incorrigibility. Miki cautioned against confusing 'history' with 'myth' because this confusion is politically very dangerous (LI, p. 98).

Miki had discussed 'myth' and 'institution' in 1937. When we consider those days, it becomes clearer that his thinking on this topic was a very careful critique of the politically dangerous tendencies in Japan. As mentioned above, in those days 'fiction' (ideology) of 'the Japanese nation' was for many people changing into 'myth'. This fiction was being rooted in the pathos of Japanese people without the feeling of its dangers. Miki's article on 'myth' should be read as a critical theoretical assessment of such a dangerous ideology in pathos.

However, the sharply critical function of Miki's thinking could not find suitable reception in those days when Japan was heading for a catastrophe. Miki died a violent death in prison in 1945.

Part 2. On the Problematic Understanding of Painting

We have learned from Miki's philosophical thinking that 'fiction' (idea, ideology or theory) displays its real power when it has become rooted in one's feeling and body, and when an ideology has become a 'myth' in our society. This view covers the case of our understanding of art.

In the case of painting, we will be able to point out the strong belief ('myth') in the understanding of 'depth', depending on the geometric perspective and also photography, which is a mechanical adaptation of the theory of perspective. Even experts of East Asian painting and painters understand and explain the structure of all paintings from the viewpoint of Western theories of geometric perspective and photography. This understanding presumes the 'viewpoint' of painters *outside* of the pictures, i.e. the existence of an external viewpoint. This assumption is not applicable to every picture, and is, furthermore, only a historically construed criterion. But, it has become a 'myth'. As I learned from Miki's thought, when a theory (ideology) has become a 'myth', it exercises great power in one's culture. So, people can't understand paintings without this criterion.

But, in fact, there are not so many pictures which were painted from this rigid geometric perspective. The viewpoint is therefore generated *within* the picture whenever a painter paints (draws) an image in the picture. This means that the viewpoint cannot be located outside the picture, for it always changes its position depending on the brushwork of the painter.¹² We cannot confirm any viewpoints outside of a picture. This is the truth of painting. We have to say, however, that although the framework of Western geometric perspective and framework of a single-lens (eye) camera have not had such a long history as painting in general, this framework has been the 'essential' one when people wanted to understand and explain pictures.

It is therefore our task to critically reexamine this understanding (= myth), considering the process of making pictures. It seems that the development of new media, digital cameras and computers has made it unnecessary to describe the details of a picture through words.

People think that by directly showing parts of it, they can precisely explain the work. Direct seeing is all they believe. There thus remains a strange belief in direct perception. Most people would then be hushed up, when professors or experts who have already won eminence as connoisseurs of art, would command, 'Take a straight look at this and you can understand it!'

But does their command really make sense? Showing the details is only

¹² Cf. Iwaki 2006b.

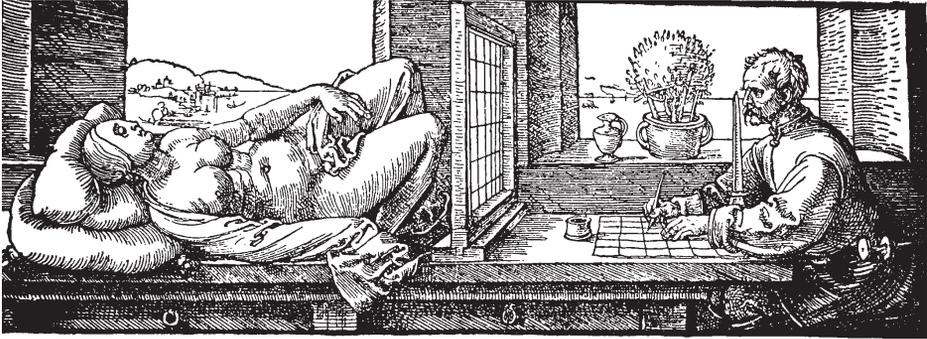


Fig. 1. Albrecht Dürer, “A painter, drawing a lying nude”, wood engraving. (cf. Solso 1994, p. 220.)

a matter of knowledge about what it is. Isn't something more important missing here? This is my question to them. This question will show its urgency when they begin to explain the *process* of making pictures. When we open art journals or textbooks, we see that most explanations of paintings depend on the theory of, and belief in, 'one viewpoint' and 'plural viewpoints' which are in a conspiracy to assume the 'existence of viewpoint(s) outside of the picture'. This belief in the 'existence of a viewpoint outside of the picture' has been originally derived from the theory of the geometric perspective since the Renaissance and the modern theory of photography. These relatively new theories have become the belief of people. It means that an 'institution' has taken root in the people's mind as a 'myth'. This 'myth' has gained strong persistency through the cognitive sciences, particularly computational psychology since the end of the nineteenth century and the art theories which have developed their theory following this psychology.

My task in this paper shall therefore be to clarify the incoherence regarding the explanation of painting by these psychological theories. Through such a reexamination of them, their rigid belief in the 'existence of viewpoint outside of the picture' will be broken down. We shall then be able to find another possibility to understand pictures.

2-1. The Problem of Computational Psychology and Its Theory of Painting

A painting isn't a simple representation (copy) of our reality, but is a medium which provides us with a perspective on reality. Through various expressive actions our experience is always reconstituted and changed in history. Belief in the constancy of perception is very strong and for people it is not easy to understand that their perceptions have been constructed and

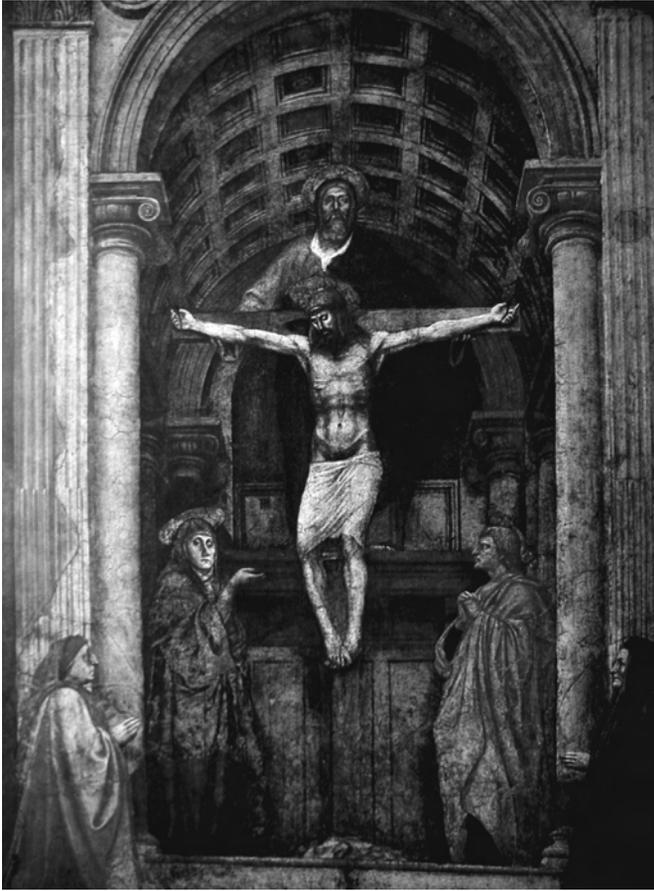


Fig. 2. Masaccio, "St. Trinity", 1426–28, 667 x 317cm, fresco. Florence, Temple of St. Mara Novella. (Cf. Solso 1994, p. 243.)

changed in the context of history. Most people undoubtedly believe that they directly touch the world through their perceptive organs.

Cognitive psychology has to be conscious of the fact that the perception of the human being is historically limited and that its framework is constantly changing. It is, however, very difficult to accept this fact as long as it is bound to its traditional assumptions.

The biggest problem is hidden in the assumption of experimental or computational psychology, in that it usually understands perception on the basis of the 'real space' in which we physically live and move. This psychology has played a very influential role in art theory, education, and aesthetics. It seems that cognitive psychology has introduced a fatal prejudice into art theory. According to computational psychology, the perception of 'depth' in pictures is only an 'illusion' on the two-dimensional tableau or screen, on which three-dimensional things in 'real space' are projected.

Is this explanation right? Can ‘real space’ really be the criterion of ‘depth’?

Computational psychology referred to geometric perspective in the Renaissance, when it wanted to explain the perception of ‘depth’. As is well known, a Renaissance architect, F. Brunelleschi (1377–1446), tried to show it by using mirrors, and L. B. Alberti (1404–1472), both an architect and painter, theorized it. Geometric perspective wasn’t only a technique of painting, but also a scientific invention which realized an illusion of real, three-dimensional space on the two-dimensional tableau. In virtue of this scientific method, the status of painters rose from that of mere craftsmen to scientists. But at the same time, the understanding that painting makes an illusion of three-dimensional space became common sense. One of the most important painters of German Renaissance, A. Dürer (1490–ca. 1538), clearly illustrated this idea in his wood engravings, making them favorite references for the psychological explanation of ‘depth’ (see, for example Solso, 1994, p. 220; Fig. 1). These works of Dürer show how the painter can make an illusion of three-dimensional things in real space on his two-dimensional tableau.

From this example, we can see how the ‘depth’ was understood.

For making a painting, its criterion is ‘real things in a three-dimensional space’.

From this standpoint, ‘depth, which is realized on a tableau’, must always be taken as an ‘illusion’.

From the technique of ‘perspective’, ‘one eye’ is fixed as the convergent point.

While the ‘painter’ and ‘real things’ belong to the same real space, the painter stands ‘outside’ of the picture. Pictorial space (the world of the picture) and real space (the real world) are entirely different.

In this explanation, ‘depth’ is always observed ‘from the side’. This means that the one who explains ‘depth’ isn’t at the point of the concerned painter, but he/she has left the position of this painter and has moved to a place from where both the painter and the things are able to be observed.

These five topics on ‘depth’ are apparently self-evident for many people and computational psychology has also shared the understanding of ‘depth, with this *common sense*. Geometric perspective is the mother of this *common sense* and photography is its adoptive mother. In the case of photography, we can identify the existence of a camera eye in a real space. This eye cannot cancel its existence, i.e. it can’t prove its alibi. Therefore, from two-dimensional pictures, we can trace the existence of a camera eye in the real space, and the subject who set it. This mechanism has enforced the belief that the viewpoint of painters also exists outside of their picture.

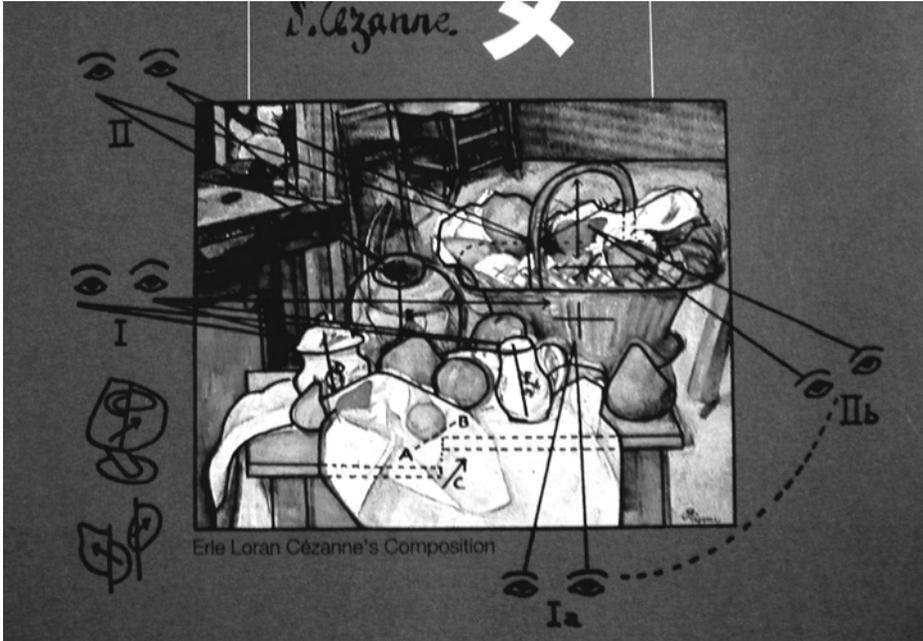


Fig. 3. E. Loran, “Cézanne’s composition” (Loran 1943).

But, there is a big problem here, one which we have to examine further.

In common sense, it is entirely overlooked that *‘depth’ originates only in the relationship between the observer and the observed by the observer (him/her)*. Topic 5 suggests that when ‘depth’ is taken as the distance between the observer and the observed, we have already left the real perception of ‘depth’ and replaced it with ‘distance’, as the perception of ‘depth’ has already been distinguished. Dürer’s wood engravings show us this incoherence. In fact, as Topic 4 suggests, the painters of the Renaissance tried to make the illusion of three-dimensional space by setting a viewpoint of the observer *outside* of the picture. Alberti’s theory of perspective is a theory of geometric proportion of ‘depth’ which premises on the ‘distance’ between the observer and the observed. Masaccio (1401–1428) also premised the ‘distance’ between the two and composed his picture dependent on the ‘distance’ which is seen when we leave the place of ‘depth’. Computational psychologists have used his picture as a very suitable proof to explain their theory of ‘depth’ (cf. Solso, 1994, pp. 242–3; Fig. 2).

Resting on this questionable assumption of common sense, two hypotheses of psychology have purportedly retained their reliability and nature of fact. It is thus claimed that (1) ‘perception of depth has its origin in the per-

ception of things in real space', and (2) 'depth realized on a two-dimensional canvas or screen is only an illusion of it'. These hypotheses have become a generally accepted opinion and have been carelessly applied to the understanding of pictures before the Renaissance and in the non-western world. Children's pictures are also understood from the viewpoint of this strange doctrine. According to this understanding, every painting which does not follow this doctrine would be judged 'strange', 'wrong' or 'immature'. But we should know that even during the Renaissance, save a few examples, there weren't any pictures which exactly and automatically followed the method of the geometric perspective. If the painters of those days, Michelangelo, Leonardo, and Raphael, for instance, had made their pictures by precisely following this mechanical method, we wouldn't distinguish the excellent individual qualities of their paintings.

No matter how strange the hypotheses of psychology, these hypotheses of perspective have penetrated into common sense even in the modern pictorial theories of East Asian countries. In this way, an ideology has become a 'myth' and has become rooted in the body. Following these hypotheses, painting has also been taught in art schools in East Asia. It wouldn't be wrong to learn a new method for art. But it is necessary to be emancipated from the fixed criterion of perspective theory, and we shouldn't reduce every painting to it when we try to understand precisely and explain the peculiarity of each painting in the world.

The above observations are also important for the understanding of modern painting, for there persist strong influences of computational psychology on it, as in the interpretation of Cézanne by Erle Loran for instance, whose interpretation of this painter is, even today, the predominantly accepted one in Japan. Loran used an illustration to explain the characteristic structure of Cézanne's painting "Still Life" (Fig. 3). We can discern from this illustration that Loran understood this picture from the viewpoint of conventional psychological theory. He assumed the viewpoints of Cézanne outside of the picture. From this viewpoint, he suggested that Cézanne did not (or could not) follow the principle of geometric perspective and so, his "Still Life" was painted from at least four viewpoints *outside* of the picture. Even if Loran thought to have shown the modern character of Cézanne's painting, his judgment itself was bound to a conventional viewpoint. From this viewpoint, Cézanne's originality could be found only in his deviation from the

norm of the geometric perspective, while his factual modernist originality was disregarded. We have to say that Loran misunderstood Cézanne's painting. We should, therefore, find another way to understand it, a way which follows and describes the 'process of making pictures' concretely.¹³

Conclusion

It is our urgent task to be emancipated from the fixed criterion of geometric perspective and to turn to an inquiry into the processes of pictorial expression. Through this practical research we can find ways to suitably understand art in the world.

As mentioned above, the theory of 'single viewpoint' of painting and that of 'plural viewpoints' share the same assumption that the viewpoint of painting exists *outside* of it, i.e. in a real three-dimensional space. We should notice that these two ideas have supported each other and allowed for strong discourses of painting. We know that 'cubism' invented the picture of 'plural viewpoints' in order to overcome the tradition of the painting with a 'single viewpoint'. Without dispute, Loran, whom we mentioned above, accepted the idea of cubism and applied it to his explanation of Cézanne's picture. From the viewpoint of cubism, he understood Cézanne's originality; nonetheless, Cézanne had not shared the same conception with the cubists who later accepted only one of his many creative aspects.

We would have to remember that an exponent of cubism, Picasso, found a good hint of painting beyond the traditional painting from the native African images. Since this legend has become popular, the theory of 'plural viewpoints' has gained its plausibility and has been applied to explain paintings which didn't follow the geometric perspective. These paintings are 'pre-modern', 'barbaric', 'naïve', 'natural', 'powerful', or 'innocent', because they 'deviate' from the pictures by geometric perspective and 'still' stay on the 'stage of plural viewpoints'. These adjectives have been used accordingly, depending on cultural viewpoints of various authors. We shouldn't overlook that these adjectives implicate an ideology which is bound to the modern Eurocentric thinking.

We should know that the notions of 'naïvité' or 'primitiveness' do not only characterize the artistic styles, but that they also involve certain ideo-

¹³ Concerning Cézanne's painting, a good hint is offered to us by G. Boehm's interpretation (Boehm 1988). On the problem of interpretation of Cézanne, see Iwaki 2006b. I analyzed the process of making pictures by children and in the non-western world in Iwaki 2001a, Chapter 4.

logical aspects. In order to free themselves from modern traditional western art, cubists depended on the 'plural viewpoints painting' of pre-modern Oceanic worlds. Gauguin moved to a 'primitive' colonial land to find new possibilities for his art. They shared a common longing for the lost paradise. But we cannot force such primitiveness on any other people, much less can we identify the primitiveness with the understanding of 'plural-viewpoints-perception', which assumes the viewpoints outside of pictures. The existence of one or plural viewpoints *outside* of the picture is only a 'myth' created by modern European painting. As Miki suggested, we have to reexamine the 'myth' of our world because this 'myth' of 'viewpoint' has penetrated even into the 'feeling' of East Asian intellectuals. We see that the Japanese intellectuals and artists of the 1930s, who had learned their European art history and had known the popularity of primitive arts, searched for such 'primitiveness' in their own southern colonial cultures, in Taiwan, for instance, and expected the artists from such cultures to make such arts.¹⁴ This demand unconsciously postulated the ideology of an Asian 'organic' unity. They have taken part in the cultural politics of the colonies of those days. They were also the contemporaries of Miki, who was at that time developing his critical theory of 'myth'.

In this paper, I don't want to insist on the needlessness of the theory of perspective. What I want to point out is that it has its limitations and is of limited scope. My proposal is to research the process of painting in a way which will bring about a relativization of the explanations offered by the theory of perspective, and which will contribute to the fair understanding and interpretation of various cultures. This will be able to be a concrete application of Miki's concept and a challenge for the revival of aesthetics.

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¹⁴ See Liu Chien Yuan, "Local Color in the Modern Painting of Taiwan", in Ken'ichi Iwaki (ed.), *Geijutu / Kattou no Genba-Nihon Kindai Geijutsushisou no Kontekusuto (Art as a Topos of Conflict: Context of the Modern Japanese Theories of Arts)*, Koyou-shobou, Kyoto 2002.

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