

K. Helen Seibert

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to consider the place of vision in philosophical thought. The kind of vision I am referring to is not an ordinary vision, but something extra-ordinary or extra-sensory. It has nothing to do with optics, nor has it anything to do with psychic phenomena.¹ The kind of vision I am speaking of is an original vision which has been called the vision of Truth. Such a vision is not seen with the physical eye, but with an "inner eye."

Everyone familiar with the history of philosophy and religion finds reference to this spiritual vision in that history. As far back as 4,000 years, vision has been referred to in the Vedas, the Upanisads, the Vedanta-Sutras as the vision of Brahma. It becomes central to the thought of the Hindus. In Eastern philosophy, the goal is not only to encounter such an experience, but to bring oneself into accord with it and teach it to others. It is that for which all beings strive, knowingly or unknowingly. It is the ultimate in spiritual development and evolution. What is seen and experienced is in every sense beyond the physical and more real than the physical. If one asks what it is that is seen, one finds reference to Brahma as having the form of light.² This is not meant in a metaphorical sense or in the sense of an archetype, but it is literally the form in which Brahma is seen--shining forth and antecedent to any archetype. Such a light is said to be directive and points to a reality beyond the illusory play of objects in the world which is ordinarily seen.

This experience is not especially Eastern or religious, for we find it occurring in Western philosophy as well. Plato spoke of

it as the vision of the Good--of Reality or of the Ideas. It is that through which one is able to have some sense of what constitutes the good man. In fact, for Plato, the difference between the philosopher and the non-philosopher is that the philosopher has undergone the arduous process which leads to this experience. He has seen the Good Itself. This is why, to Plato, not every man is a philosopher. Philosophers are few, for the vision of the Good is something unique and attainable only by those who are capable of it and willing to undergo the process.

In contemporary terms, Heidegger speaks of vision and finds it something central. In Being and Time, he says:

Only an entity which, as futural, is equiprimordially in the process of HAVING-BEEN can, by handing down to itself the possibility it has inherited, take over its own thrownness and be IN THE MOMENT OF VISION for its time.³

Heidegger later points out that since Plato, our power of vision has degenerated. It is no longer authentic. This parallels the degeneration we have witnessed in Western civilization.

Apart from the reasons which Heidegger suggests, that a retrieval of the foundations of our own tradition is necessary to the transcending of the degeneration of our civilization and its philosophical element, there are a number of other reasons why consideration of the place of vision in life and philosophy is important and interesting. One is the intrinsic character of the experience itself. It is known as something great or sublime. Yet it is more than just a great experience. Aristotle said that seeing is one of the senses in which we delight the most, and one of the senses which

makes us know most--bringing to light differences between many things. In knowledge of the soul as well, seeing contributes greatly to the advance of Truth.⁴

Another reason for the importance of vision is the quest for meaning. That is, in the course of growing, one finds oneself asking questions in regard to the meaning and value of life and existence in such a way that answers to his questions might be found. If one does not first tranquilize himself in the face of what can be earth-shaking questions, he can begin to find something positive opening up. It is vision which helps bridge these gaps, even though the process is not so simple. I shall attempt to show all of this through my consideration of Heidegger and the Hindu.

What I shall be discussing in the following pages is this: How and out of what circumstance does vision, which is not only great but also gives a support and direction in life, arise? How does it give meaning to the problematic of existence and value to that existence? That discussion will culminate in the acknowledgment that vision itself is, in the end, problematical. For one thing, it is only a small part of the story. Because one believes himself to have seen something of the Truth does not mean that he has not somehow projected it, or that it really exists and has something to communicate to man, or that man can effectively communicate that Truth or vision to anyone else. Others have different backgrounds and see things differently than we do. We may never be able to arrive at it again ourselves or interpret it properly. As Heidegger has indicated, vision easily degenerates. For the Hindu, a path is often

revealed to one, but many factors distract one from it. In the past, we have seen how evil may overtake and destroy what good a few have been able to construct.

Before attempting to confront these problems, we must consider the experience as it unfolds itself. This I will undertake by noting what Heidegger and the Hindu have said about it. Since both suggest that man is at all times prone to devalue the visual in both philosophy and life generally, such notice will also involve considering the path leading into the experience. When the initial delineation of the visual as something central in philosophy has been completed, I will return to a consideration of the problems involved. Throughout, I will have been seeking to recall the reader to a reconsideration of a common element in both the Eastern and Western tradition and central to each. My guiding reasons will be the relationship of vision in both Eastern and Western philosophy to the problems of existence, meaning and value.

VITA

Miss Seubert began her studies at the University of Pittsburgh in 1963 and transferred to The Pennsylvania State University in 1964 where she majored in painting, drawing and sculpture and minored in The History of Art and Philosophy. She received her B.A. in 1966 and studied for one more year at the New York Studio School of Painting, Drawing, and Sculpture, 8 W. 8th Street, New York, New York. In 1967, she returned to The Pennsylvania State University to study philosophy until 1971, receiving her M.A. in Philosophy in 1970 with general minors in Literature and Eastern Religions. Her specialty examinations were on Kant and her special interests Ethics and Metaphysics. Miss Seubert taught three courses in Introductory Logic at the University Park campus and assisted in courses on the History of Philosophy, Logic, and Oriental Philosophy. From 1971 to 1973, she was an Instructor in Philosophy at The Pennsylvania State University branch campus in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, where she taught courses in Logic, History of Philosophy, Ancient Philosophy, Contemporary Philosophy, and Oriental Philosophy (Hindu and Chinese). Her languages are French and German, and she has traveled in England, France, Italy, and India.