BINOKULARE BILLEDER

Enhver ved, at mennesket almindeligvis fødes med et *binokulart* syn, dvs. ikke som en kyklop, men med et *par* af øjne, der mere eller mindre virker i samme retning og sammen bidrager til dannelsen af det samlede menneskelige synsfelt. Hvorvidt dette øjenpar imidlertid er strengt anatomisk og funktionelt *symmetrisk*, eller om der f.ex. er anledning til at skelne mellem højre- og venstreøjethed, er fortsat genstand for indgående undersøgelser: vi kan således ikke sige med sikkerhed, om det spil mellem symmetri og asymmetri, der er så vigtigt for vores teoretiske tilgang ikke mindst til kunstens billeder, har nogen som helst naturlig fundering. Til gengæld ved vi, at en *asymmetrisk opbygning af høreorganerne* yder et væsentligt bidrag til *uglens* overordentligt præcise hørelse, - således at forstå, at det er en *betingelse* for denne, at uglens hørefelt aldrig får lov at blive binært symmetrisk:

Ørernes asymmetri betyder, at 'lydvinduet' eller høreindtrykket svarende til den ene side af hovedet er et spejlbillede af det, der svarer til den anden side, *bortset fra* at det højre er forskudt 10-15 grader opad i forhold til det venstre.[1]

En så udtalt funktionel asymmetri spiller dog næppe nogen rolle for det menneskelige syn. En klassisk, fysiologisk orienteret, teori om synet tog det ganske vist for givet, at menneskets evne til at se *dybde* (også hvor der ikke *er* nogen dybde, som i maleriet) beroede på, at det var født med to øjne, - også selvom enhver ved, at dybden ikke forsvinder ved at knibe det ene øje i (antagelig er medfødt enøjethed eller kyklopisme så sjældent forekommende, at man har kunnet fastholde den tanke, at toøjethed i det mindste er en betingelse for *indlæringen* af dybdesynet, som derpå, én gang erhvervet, eventuelt ville kunne fungere også med kun ét virksomt øje, ligesom den, der én gang har lært at gå på to ben, ikke har svært ved, i nødsituationer, at gå kun på ét). Nyere perceptionsforskning[2] har imidlertid indset og skarpt pointeret, at konstruktionen af et dybdeindtryk ud fra den beskedne vinkelforskel mellem de to synsaxer forudsætter, at betragteren allerede *har* en forestilling om en rumlig enhed (et *objekt*), der ses som liggende til grund for de to øjnes forskellige synsindtryk. At med andre ord toøjetheden ikke er en tilstrækkelig - og end ikke en nødvendig! - betingelse for dybdesynet.

Den konklusion trænger sig således på, at det ene øje faktisk er *overflødigt*, - i hvert fald sålænge det blot gælder om at betragte det, vi kalder virkeligheden. Dette overflødige, flakkende øje kan imidlertid indfanges af fænomener, som går ud over det blot objektive, - vi kan sige, idet vi udnytter en værdifuld sproglig tvetydighed på dansk: af *andre syn*. Sådanne "andre syn" findes der i hvert fald to vigtige kategorier af. Andre syn er dels de punkter i synsfeltet, *som*

BINOCULAR PICTURES

As every one knows, man is usually born with a binocular *vision, i.e. not as a Cyclops, but with* a pair *of eyes more or less working in the same direction, thus mutually contributing to the total human field of vision. To what extent this binarity equals a strict* symmetry, *is still, however, a matter of investigation: perhaps there are reasons to speak, e.g., of dexterity and sinistrality of vision, just as we do in the case of hands. At any rate, we cannot make any too certain asumptions as regards a physiological foundation of the* jeu *between symmetry and asymmetry, however important it may be to our understanding of Art. Nevertheless, we know that in the case of* owls, *a pronounced asymmetry in the morphology of the ears is an indispensable* condition *of the extreme auditive alertness of these exquisite birds:*

The asymmetry of the ears means that the 'sound window', or the hearing on one side of the head, is the mirror image of that on the other, except *that the right one is displaced 10-15 degrees higher than that on the left-hand side.*[1]

We may assume, though, that a functional asymmetry carried to this extent is absent from human vision. It is true that a classical, predominantly physiological, theory of vision took for granted that man's capacity to perceive spatial depth *(even when it's not there, as in painting) was due to the binocular vision, - even though any one knows that closing one eye does not at all make visual depth vanish (presumably innate one-eyedness or cyclopism is so rarely occuring that it was possible to maintain the idea that at least the* acquisition *of 3-dimensional vision presupposed two-eyedness, thus leaving open the possibility that once acquired it could be exercised with one eye only, - just like a person who has learned to walk using two legs finds little difficulty in walking with only one, at least temporarily). However, recent cognitive research*[2] *has realized and sharply emphasized that the construction of an impression of visual depth by means of the slight angular divergence between the two axes of vision* presupposes *the conception of a single spatial unit (an* object) already identified *as the common cause of the two distinct visual impressions. That is: that two-eyedness is not a sufficient - or even a necessary! - condition of 3-dimensional vision.*

In a certain sense, then, we may be justified in saying that one of the eyes is actually superfluous, *- at least as far as the perception of what we call "reality" goes. However, this superfluous, vagrant eye is apt to be captivated by phaenomena which go beyond the concept of a mere object, - we might say, alluding to a valuable ambiguity of language: by* "other visions" (vision *meaning either the faculty of seeing or a more or less striking phenomenon actually seen). There are at least two important cases of such "other visions". On one hand, there are those points in the visual field* which are not only seen, but which themselves are seeing, *i.e. manifesting the regard of another (this need not be eyes or figures resembling eyes: any gloomy gateway or half-opened letter slit will do; indeed, on quite another scale, we might say that the vision of* Earth *itself is so stri-*

ikke bare ses, men som også selv ser, dvs. andre *blikke* (det behøver ikke at være øjne eller figurer der ligner øjne: en skummel portåbning eller brevspræk på klem kan gøre det; ja, i en helt anden skala kan man måske sige, at synet af planeten *Jorden* er så gribende, fordi det er det første himmellegeme, hvorom vi med sikkerhed ved, at det kikker igen!). Men andre syn er også de større områder af synsfeltet, som på en eller anden måde er udhævet eller indrammet som i sig selv afsluttede, hvilende i sig selv, dvs. de æstetisk priviligerede *billeder.* I disse tilfælde ophører det andet øje med at være overflødigt: når de forelskede drukner sig i hinandens øjenbrønde, drejer det sig om andet og mere end at udmåle dybde, og der tillades derfor ingen flakkende sideblikke; tilsvarende vil, når kunstværket melder sig, blikket nok få lov at flakke, men kun *inden for de dimensioner, som værket sætter* (og som til gengæld, i deres uendelighed, synes at love det flakkende blik en uudtømmelig lyst).

Det er denne genopdukken i kunsten af det andet øje og dets i virkeligheden (men også kun dér) overflødige frihed, der med skræmmende konsekvens slår ud i Dorte Dahlins seneste billeder, besatte som de er med en vrimmel af fremmede, asymmetriske og inkongruente, blikke. Det er *binokulare billeder,* som tager tøøjetheden (symmetrisk eller asymmetrisk) på ordet, idet de sender hvert øje ud på *sin* mission. *Double-bind*-billeder, som f.ex. sender det ene ud i rummet for at konfronteres med planetens blå øje, mens det andet må "blive stående" for at se vegetationen gå sort/hvid (og derved samtidig minde om, at selv den vildeste kosmologi ikke er mulig uden et sted at stå!). Grusomme billeder, som end ikke viger tilbage for at henvise det frie øje til et negativt parallel-univers, hvor lyset er sort og tulipanerne grønne blomster med røde blade. Kun ved således at mobilisere[3] synets fulde frihed, divergens og spredning kan billedet genvinde sine "tabte afstande"[4] og dermed angive sit sted som betinget af en endnu ufuldstændigt udforsket, mange-dimensional synsevne. En *modus videndi,* hvis pendant i billedkonstruktionen er, hvad Dorte Dahlin kalder en "gummigeometri", dvs. en geometri, der *udfolder* rummet, og ikke blot en *"neo-geo"*, der nok taler om det, men uden at gøre noget ved det. *Ad oculos!*

Kasper Nefer Olsen

(1) John Sparks/Tony Soper: *Owls. Their natural and unnatural history,* Newton Abbot 1972, p. 183. (2) Ray Jackendoff: *Consciousness and the Computational Mind,* Cambridge Mass. 1987, p. 165f. (3) Jeg minder om, at dette ord egentlig betyder: *"sætte i bevægelse"*. (4) Se hertil kataloget: *Mi Yüan. Tabt afstand* til Dorte Dahlins udstilling på Galleri Stalke, 1988 (med bidrag af Vibeke Pedersen og Poul Erik Tøjner).

kingly salient for no other reason than our knowing that this planet is always looking back at you!). But "other visions" might as well be those limited areas of the visual field which in some way or another are culturally focalized or "framed" to appear more or less self-contained and autonomous, i.e. those aesthetically privileged phaenomena called pictures. *In these cases, the other eye ceases to be superfluous: when the lovers seek to drown themselves in one another's eyepits, it is no longer just a question of measuring depth, and therefore both eyes are incessantly required, no vagrancy is allowed. Likewise, when the work of art stakes its claims, the regard will be allowed to drift* only within the dimensions fixed by the work *(which, admittedly, by their very infinitude, at the same time yield to the drifting eye a promise of infinite joy).*

Perhaps, this reappearance of the second eye - superfluous in the realm of reality, indispensable in the world of art - is the most striking feature of Dorte Dahlin's recent paintings which seem virtually invaded, as it were, by a multitude of strange, asymmetric and incongruous viewpoints. These are most veritably binocular pictures, *taking two-eyedness literally by sending out each of the two human eyes on its own mission. These are* double-bind *pictures, relegating one eye to a lunar orbit confronting the blue-eyedness of planet Earth while the other one must stay behind, watching the vegetation turn black-and-white (pinting out, by the way, that no vision of the universe is possible without a fixed point of view!). These are, indeed,* cruel *pictures that do not hesitate to exile the free eye to a negative, parallel universe where the tulips are green flowers with red petals. Only by mobilizing*[3]*, in this radical way, all the freedom, divergence and dissemination of vision, will the picture be able to regain its "lost distances"*[4]*, thereby making explicit its own particular* locus *as conditioned by a multi-dimensional capacity of vision, hitherto only partially explored. Corresponding to this* modus videndi *still to be learned, we find a principle of pictural construction which Dorte Dahlin herself refers to as "rubber geometry", i.e. a geometry* unfolding *space, and not just referring to it, like any old "*neo-geo*", without doing anything about it. This is arguing, indeed,* ad oculos!

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(1) John Sparks/Tony Soper: Owls. Their natural and unnatural history, *Newton Abbot 1972, p. 183. (2) Ray Jackendoff:* Consciousness and the Computational Mind, *Cambridge Mass. 1987, p. 165f. (3) Recall that the proper meaning of this word is "*to render movable*". (4) Cf. the catalogue:* Mi Yüan *[Lost Distance] to the exposition by Dorte Dahlin at the Stalke Gallery, 1988 (texts by Vibeke Pedersen and Poul Erik Tøjner).*