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Appreciating Nature and Art: Recent Western and Chinese Perspectives

Glenn Parsons & Xin Zhang

Abstract

Landscape painting has played a significant role in shaping practices of nature appreciation in Western and Chinese cultures. Both cultures have also seen the recent emergence of philosophical views of nature appreciation that stress the importance of ecological understanding. However, these philosophical views differ in their response to the influence of the landscape painting tradition: whereas Western approaches have largely been critical, Chinese ecoaestheticians have embraced it. In this paper, we explore this difference and argue that it is not explained by differences between Western and Chinese art but by differences in Western and Chinese philosophers' conceptions of ecology. We further argue that, even granting these differing conceptions of ecology, consideration of the problematic aspects of the landscape painting tradition remains a pressing concern for ecoaesthetics.

Key Words

Chinese aesthetics; ecoaesthetics; landscape painting; nature appreciation

1. Introduction

Landscape painting has played a significant role in shaping practices of nature appreciation in the West. However, recent philosophical discussion debates the impact of this legacy. The debate has been driven by two main developments, the first of which is the rise of environmentalism and a general concern for the environmental impact of various practices, even practices of aesthetic appreciation. The second development is the emergence, within philosophical aesthetics, of views emphasizing the appreciation of nature as a natural environment to be understood on its own terms. Proponents of such views have criticized the landscape painting tradition as contributing to overly formalist or subjective appreciative practices that fail to take nature on its own terms, thereby misconstruing it as an aesthetic object, thwarting ethical treatment of the environment, or both.^[1] These criticisms have focused on the role of art-inspired models of appreciation in shaping practices that reduce the natural environment to a backdrop for human activities or a scenic resource understood in formalist terms.

It is interesting to compare this situation to recent developments in Chinese philosophy. In recent years, some Chinese philosophers have developed views on the aesthetics of nature known as ecological aesthetics, or simply ecoaesthetics.^[2] These views have affinities with some of the Western views just mentioned.^[3] In particular, ecoaesthetics places emphasis on the role of ecological knowledge in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. This echoes the views of Western philosophers, such as Allen Carlson, who have stressed the necessity of bringing a scientific understanding of nature to bear in aesthetic appreciation.^[4] Proponents of ecoaesthetics have also voiced complaints about contemporary appreciative practices similar to those raised by Western philosophers. Xiangzhan Cheng, a leading proponent of the ecoaesthetics view, writes:

[S]o-called natural beauty mainly refers to the aesthetic quality of natural things, including their pleasant colors and forms of things, enjoyable sound, seductive smells and so on. The most typical example of this is the beauty of a natural landscape (i.e. scenic beauty)...Because of this, beautiful natural landscapes have been despoiled.^[5]

One notable point of difference between Chinese ecoaesthetics and Western views, such as Carlson's, however, is their attitude toward artistic models of appreciation. China has a tradition of landscape painting older than that of the West and just as influential in shaping cultural attitudes toward nature. Furthermore, despite significant differences, traditional Chinese landscape painting shares many general stylistic characteristics with Western landscape art, including a preoccupation with certain types of scenery and an emphasis on formal composition. Nonetheless, Cheng writes, "While it disapproves of traditional aesthetic appreciation that is not ecologically oriented (or without an ecological awareness), [Ecoaesthetics] does not necessarily oppose a form of aesthetic enjoyment based on artistic form, so to speak."^[6] In fact, defenders of ecoaesthetics go further and explicitly trace the origins of their conception of nature appreciation directly to ideas inherent in the Chinese landscape painting tradition.^[7]

In this paper, we examine this difference in attitude towards landscape painting, as expressed in recent Chinese and Western nature aesthetics.

After surveying some specific concerns about artistic appreciation in the Western context, we consider some distinctive characteristics of Chinese landscape art and its appreciation, and attempt to explain its positive reception by defenders of ecoaesthetics. We conclude by arguing that this more sympathetic approach to artistic influences points to some important theoretical questions about the ecoaesthetics position that remain unaddressed.

2. The Western landscape painting tradition and its critics

Landscape painting, as a distinct artistic genre in the West, arose in early sixteenth-century Europe, with painters such as Nicolas Poussin, Salvatore Rosa, and Claude Lorrain giving new depth and interest to the painterly depiction of landscape. While by no means the sole factor, the popularity of their works helped shape emerging European tastes in landscape over the next two centuries.^[8] Concepts that became central to the appreciation of nature in the eighteenth century, such as the sublime and the picturesque, were strongly associated with the landscape painting tradition. The latter association was particularly close, with the very notion of a picturesque landscape harkening back to an ideal landscape painting.^[9] The emphasis on a framed, formally pleasing picture as an aesthetic ideal for nature fostered an emphasis on scenic views of the landscape: views possessing properties such as symmetry and balance, and "compositional features, such as having a background, a middle ground, and a foreground, and nominal subject matter, such as high land, water, encircling vegetation, and perhaps a few individual figures centered in the middle."^[10] Modern approaches to landscape aesthetics that continue to emphasize scenic, that is, formally pleasing, views can trace their lineage back to the early influences of the landscape painting tradition.

Philosophical criticism of these influences has focused on the landscape tradition's focus on certain formal features of natural environments, in particular visual design qualities of landscapes. It has also taken issue with a second tendency associated with the artistic tradition, that of viewing landscape in terms of its associations with human history, rendering nature as a prop or background in a human-centered drama. In this view, nature lacks aesthetic interest *per se*. There are two problems, critics claim, with these approaches. First, they mischaracterize nature as an aesthetic object, since nature is not a two-dimensional arrangement of formal qualities, like a picture, nor is it merely a palimpsest for human feeling or association. It is, rather, an object in its own right, namely an environment that originates and operates according to the principles of natural history and ecology. As such, aesthetic appreciation of nature, insofar as it has been shaped by the landscape painting tradition, is claimed to be inappropriate or defective, in much the way that an appreciation of an artwork as if it were something other than an artwork would be inappropriate or defective.^[11] One obvious manifestation of this is a devaluing of landscapes lacking certain preferred features.^[12]

Secondly, critics have charged these appreciative practices with encouraging environmental imprudence. Widespread practices of viewing nature in humanized terms or mainly in terms of formal aesthetic values have had important implications for human-nature interactions. As Marcia Eaton has argued, decisions about environmental interventions and practices are complicated when public perceptions of nature and its value are based on considerations detached from ecological reality. Thus, the artistic approach is charged with encouraging an overly human-centered approach, thwarting the development of sound environmental practices.^[13]

These criticisms of the landscape painting tradition's influence on nature appreciation have not gone uncontested, however. Some have rejected the claim that the appreciation of formal features mischaracterizes nature's aesthetic properties.^[14] Others have embraced the humanizing of nature. Tom Leddy, for example, writes that "projecting craft and art criteria onto rocks and pools is a *good idea*, for it usually enhances appreciation."^[15] In a similar vein, Isis Brook identifies "redemptive elements" of the picturesque that make it useful for fostering love of neglected nature that is in between wilderness and the human.^[16]

Rather than pursuing this ongoing debate in Western philosophical aesthetics, however, our aim here is to explain the absence of an analogous debate in recent discussions of Chinese ecoaesthetics. To that end, we now turn to an examination of the Chinese tradition of landscape painting, a rich tradition with no less cultural influence than its Western counterpart.

3. The Chinese landscape painting tradition

The representation of landscape is found in very early Chinese painting; it developed under the influence of the Confucian and Daoist ideas that shaped wider Chinese culture.^[17] Daoism encouraged an interest in the artistic representation of landscape through its celebration of the philosophical ideal of a retreat from society into a freer existence in the natural world. Emphasizing the harmonious relation, in a metaphysical

sense, between humans and nature, Daoism posited a unity of all things in the Dao (道), rather than a radical distinction between humanity and an inanimate, physical world. It thus inspired a sense of animism about all of the physical world and the absence of a clear distinction between that world and human beings. Nature, therefore, figures as a key element in the works of Daoist-influenced painters.

The depiction of landscape took on new importance, however, during the Six Dynasties Period (fifth century BCE), with the influence of the Buddhist idea that images can "resonate with the spiritual force of the Buddha." This gave painting a "new meditative function," as the image was regarded as able to "convey the spiritual presence of a person or an object that is no longer physically present."^[18] Landscape paintings no longer served to merely represent an idea, such as freedom from moral conventions, or the union of humanity and the natural world. In addition, they allowed the viewer to experience unity with nature via the artistic representation. This idea provided further impetus to landscape painting, and this period is generally viewed as the beginning of landscape painting as a distinct artistic genre in Chinese art. In subsequent centuries, the genre developed and evolved, reaching a high point during the Song dynasty era (960-1279 CE).

In very general terms, the cultural and philosophical roots of the genre produced an approach to art and a corresponding appreciative practice that differs in significant ways from that of Western landscape painting. Some of the key distinctive elements of Chinese painting are found in the "Six rules of painting," compiled by Xie He in the sixth century. The first of these rules holds that a painting must possess "spirit resonance life movement."^[19] This principle rests on the Daoist idea, alluded to above, that fundamental reality is not physical matter but the living spirit of the Dao (道) (referred to as *Qi*), with the physical forms of things merely representing traces of this spirit.^[20] For the painter, this meant that representational realism was relatively unimportant, the main consideration being whether the painting succeeds in capturing the deeper spiritual resonance of *Qi* in the object depicted. Paintings that did so were said to possess a highly prized distinctive vitality, or life-movement, as a result.

An important aspect of this rendering of the *Qi* of a landscape is the idea of the artistic conception of the painter. In the Dao, human and natural spirit cannot be distinguished and ultimately are one. As one writer put it: "The continuous presence of *Qi* in all modalities of being makes everything flow together as the unfolding of a single process."^[21] Thus, in rendering the *Qi* of the landscape, the painter is at the same time rendering his own *Qi*. The painter does not, therefore, aim to capture the objective essence of the landscape, an aim of some Western painters. Rather, as Li and Ryan put it, "Images...correspond pictorially (and externally) to the artists' inner domain of emotions, feelings and thoughts about nature."^[22] Longxi Zhang, in a discussion of the Chinese poet Li Bai, describes this artistic attitude as follows:

Clearly the poet does not wish to distinguish his subjective self and the blue mountain while bestowing feelings on the natural scene. There are many other Chinese poems that combine emotions with scenes skillfully to integrate the human and the natural, with no clear distinction of the self and the natural environment, thus forming a long and rich tradition of seeking spiritual values and the calm of the mind in the beauty of nature.^[23]

As this quotation suggests, the importance of the artist's conception in appreciation makes it vital that the appreciator bring keen observation and feeling to his or her engagement with the artwork, so as to apprehend the vitality of spirit conveyed in the work.^[24]

More specific stylistic elements of Chinese painting, such as notions of formal composition and pictorial cohesion, also differ from those of the Western landscape tradition. Structural principles of painting involving the formal relations between brush strokes loom large in the Chinese understanding of notions such as pictorial integrity and cohesion.^[25] Here again, many differences are traceable to the distinctive philosophical elements of Chinese painting. One of the most prominent is the use of empty space, highly significant in virtue of being indicative of the Dao, which is traditionally described in negative terms.^[26] Empty space was viewed as necessary for a work's vitality, insofar as it allowed *Qi* to flow in the painting.^[27] Regarding formal composition, conceptions of the appropriate way to balance opposing elements also emerged from Daoist ideas.^[28] The use of particular sorts of perspective in Chinese painting has also been tied to these philosophical views.^[29]

Differences between Western and Chinese approaches are also evident in the absence in Chinese painting of certain approaches that loom large in the Western tradition. There is, for example, a relative lack of emphasis on the personification of nature, religious allegory, or notions of Romantic transcendence of nature. These differences are often accounted for in terms of the Chinese rejection of a meaningful human-

nature opposition. Western thought, influenced by Christian and later materialist ideas, posited a gulf between humanity and nature. This naturally led to an artistic interest in the divine or supernatural, as in artistic representations of the sublime. In contrast, painters in the Chinese tradition showed relatively little interest in such subject matter.^[30]

4. Ecoaesthetics: uniting ecology and art?

Having reviewed the general features of the Chinese landscape tradition, we now return to our main focus, the attitude of recent ecoaesthetics to this tradition. In his presentation of ecoaesthetics, Cheng writes that "[ecoaesthetics] does not necessarily oppose a form of aesthetic enjoyment based on artistic form."^[31] Here, the contrast with Western debates is clear. Western philosophers who have emphasized the importance of ecology in nature appreciation have been critical of the landscape tradition, with its formal, picturesque values and its imposition of the human perspective, seeing it as largely antithetical to the ecological approach to appreciation. Cheng, however, denies any such tension.

An obvious explanation for this difference would be that Chinese art is different from Western art and therefore does not pose the same problems for an ecological approach. However, this explanation does not seem satisfactory, given that these problems arise from very general characteristics of art. For, as discussed in the previous section, the Chinese landscape tradition, perhaps even more than the Western, has emphasized the imposition of subjective feeling, mood, and ideas onto nature. Also, while formal features, such as visual design qualities, play a lesser role in Chinese than Western painting, the Chinese tradition has its own principles of pictorial composition, albeit ones ultimately understood in the context of Chinese ideas and practices. It is by no means clear that such principles do not lead to a devaluing of certain environments or problematic habits of behavior toward the environment.

In any event, a more promising explanation for ecoaesthetics positing unity of ecological and artistic appreciation is at hand. This explanation appeals not to the distinctive character of Chinese art but to a distinctive Chinese understanding of ecology. If we examine the writings of ecoaesthetic philosophy, we see that this explanation indeed matches closely to their views.

In Western conceptions, ecological understanding generally refers to a body of empirical knowledge on the biological and physical interactions constituting the operation of different ecosystems. In the context of ecoaesthetics, however, it is understood quite differently. Cheng refers to the Daoist conception of the unity of nature, for example, as an "ecological worldview." He writes: "To some extent, the Chinese mode of thought about *Qi* and the cosmos consisting of *Qi* is very close to the worldview interpreted through today's science of ecology and philosophical ecology, which emphasizes the connectivity and interrelatedness between community members."^[32] An appreciation of nature that is based on Daoist conceptions is, therefore, in his view, an ecological one. Given that Chinese landscape painting was heavily influenced by Daoist ideas, and this sense of metaphysical unity, we can see the basis for Cheng's view that there is no conflict between ecoaesthetics and the artistic approach.

Indeed, Cheng's discussion makes it clear that the ecoaesthetic approach is not only compatible with the artistic tradition but has been implicit in the tradition all along: "The perception of a landscape," he writes, "is not simply the awareness of scenery but of the complex and dynamic fields of energy transformation that are present. In terms of Chinese aesthetics, it is the appreciation of nature's vitality (*Sheng Ji*) or spirit resonance (*Qi Yun*). We have arrived at a new model of nature appreciation."^[33] The new model of nature appreciation described here is, in fact, the same approach to appreciation that is central in the Chinese artistic tradition, as we saw earlier.

This explanation seems to account for the ecoaesthetic attitude toward the landscape tradition. However, we should also ask whether this attitude is tenable. Does embracing the Daoist ecological worldview render worries about the artistic tradition otiose? Here we may consider the two Western criticisms of the artistic tradition separately, starting with the charge of mischaracterizing nature. The Daoist conception of the unity of nature might be seen to reject the entire idea of a distinction between the subject and an objective nature, hence the charge that artistic appreciation fails to apprehend nature objectively would be incoherent. To raise the question whether ecoaesthetics renders the appreciation of nature as overly human-centric would be to assume a distinction between humanity and nature, which is precisely what the ecoaesthetic view denies.

Whether this response is satisfactory, we will address shortly. But first we note that, even if it is satisfactory, the same response will not address the second concern about the artistic tradition, namely its effect on human treatment of the environment. We may grant that the Daoist

idea of the unity of nature may be environmentally positive in the broader sense of promoting a general sense of unity between humanity and nature. But it cannot simply be asserted that this enhanced feeling of empathy for nature, produced by ecoaesthetics' emphasis on human-nature unity, will necessarily outweigh the environmentally harmful effects of human-centric appreciation. It thus remains an open empirical question what the overall environmental impact of the ecoaesthetic approach to appreciation will be.^[34]

This is a critical issue for ecoaesthetics, given that its proponents describe it as an inherently ethical view, requiring "treating the natural environment as a dynamic organic ecosystem and holding a respectful attitude towards the natural environment."^[35] This claim, however, needs support from a closer analysis of the appreciative practices sanctioned by ecoaesthetics. In a recent discussion, for example, Li and Ryan defend the ethical merit of ecoaesthetics by emphasizing the environmental benefits of integrating natural and human spaces, as in the garden city concept and the rejection of isolated wilderness as an ideology.^[36] But while the notion of wilderness can be abused and so lead to environmentally negative outcomes, so can the notion of human-nature unity. This possibility, however, is not addressed in their discussion.

Returning to the first criticism, namely mischaracterizing nature, it is not so clear that it can be easily dismissed, either. Ecoaesthetics, it was suggested, might look to avoid it by appealing to the Daoist rejection of an objective conception of nature. But in fact, ecoaesthetics does not reject this conception, at least not categorically. Cheng, for example, does not see the traditional Daoist ecological worldview as incompatible with the requirement for ecological understanding in something more like the Western sense. On the contrary, he cites just such a requirement as one of the "four cornerstones" of ecoaesthetics. It is, he writes, "imperative for ecological aesthetic appreciation to rely on the ecological knowledge."^[37] He subsequently clarifies that "ecological knowledge" in this context refers to "ecology, history, paleontology, geology, biogeography" and that "it is ecology as a scientific discipline that reveals what I called 'ecological aesthetic quality' in the natural world."^[38]

But if ecoaesthetics holds that an objective understanding of nature, as revealed in these sciences, is necessary for appropriate appreciation, it becomes unclear how it can also reject the very conception of a subject/object distinction when it embraces appreciation in line with the artistic tradition. At the very least, we are left with important unresolved questions as to how these distinct conceptions of ecology relate to each other. Ecoaesthetics proponents have tended to glide over these questions. Cheng, for instance, writes that "to some extent, the Chinese mode of thought about *Qin* and the cosmos consisting of *Qin* is very close to the worldview interpreted through today's science of ecology."^[39] But the basis for this claim of closeness is unclear. Both concepts involve connectedness, but this is a very generic similarity and the concepts are substantively different in important ways. *Qin* is not a scientific concept, for example, and claims about it cannot be straightforwardly related to claims in sciences such as paleontology or geology. The metaphysical claim that all things are related as manifestations of *Qin* is apparently an *a priori* claim that, if true, is true about all of nature. Any two things at all would be related in terms of *Qin*, but this is not true of relations in geology, paleontology, and other branches of what might broadly be called ecological science.^[40] In short, it is unclear how the two metaphysical views of nature embodied in ecoaesthetics fit together, indeed even whether they can fit together.

It might be suggested, perhaps in a pragmatic spirit, that both senses of ecological understanding should be embraced, if each contributes to better treatment of the environment. In this view, we might forego sorting out the metaphysics of ecoaesthetics and allow ethical considerations to drive the selection of metaphysical assumptions, perhaps even past the point of consistency. This would fit with ecoaesthetics' emphasis on ecological ethics, mentioned earlier. However, as we have seen, debates over the legacy of the Western landscape tradition suggest that these two different conceptions of nature may actually pull in quite different directions, in terms of their influence on our treatment of nature. In our view, therefore, a closer reassessment of the legacy of the artistic tradition of nature appreciation remains a pressing theoretical issue for future development of the ecoaesthetics approach.^[41]

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Endnotes

[1] Allen Carlson, "On the Possibility of Quantifying Scenic Beauty," *Landscape Planning*, 4 (1977), 131-172; "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 37 (1979), 267-275; Yuriko Saito, "Appreciating Nature on its Own Terms," *Environmental Ethics*, 20 (1998a), 135-149; "The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56 (1998b), 101-111; Glenn Parsons, *Aesthetics and Nature* (London: Continuum Press, 2008).

[2] Here we focus on the most developed version of ecoaesthetics, at least in the English literature, that of Xiangzhan Cheng; see his "Environmental Aesthetics and Ecological Aesthetics: Connections and Differences," in X. Cheng, A. Berleant, P. Gobster, and W. Xinhao (eds.), *Ecological Aesthetics and Ecological Assessment and Planning* (Zhengzhou: Henan People's Press, 2013a), pp. 85-104, and "On the Four Cornerstones of Ecological Aesthetic Appreciation," in S. Estok and W. Kim (eds.), *East Asian Ecocriticism: A Critical Reader* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013b), pp. 221-236. Other philosophers associated with the view are Li Xinfu, Zeng Fanren, and Wangheng Chen, who develops ecoaesthetics in his *Chinese Environmental Aesthetics*, trans. Feng Su, ed. Gerald Cipriani (New York: Routledge, 2015). For discussion of the views of these philosophers, see Cheng (2013a), and Allen Carlson, "The Relationship between Eastern Ecoaesthetics and Western Environmental Aesthetics," *Philosophy East and West*, 67 (2017), 117-139.

[3] For a detailed comparison, see Carlson, "The Relationship between Eastern Ecoaesthetics and Western Environmental Aesthetics."

[4] Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment;" see also his "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment, and Objectivity," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 40 (1981), 15-27.

[5] Cheng, "Environmental Aesthetics and Ecological Aesthetics: Connections and Differences," p. 233.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 221.

[7] Xiangzhan Cheng, "Aesthetic Engagement, Ecosophy C, and Ecological Appreciation," *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 11 (2013c); Q. Li, and J. Ryan, "Nature, Engagement, Empathy: *Yijing* as a Chinese Ecological Aesthetics," *Environmental Values*, 26 (2017), 343-364.

[8] For a general overview of the Western landscape tradition, see K. Clark, *Landscape into Art* (London: Harper and Row, 1976).

[9] A classic account of the picturesque is Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View*. (London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1927); for a contemporary discussion, see J. Dixon-Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994).

[10] Carlson, "The Relationship between Eastern Ecoaesthetics and Western Environmental Aesthetics," p. 120.

[11] See Carlson *ibid.*, and also: Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," Saito, "Appreciating Nature on its Own Terms," "The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature," and Callicott, "Wetland Gloom and Wetland Glory."

[12] Swamps and plains, for example: see Evernden, "Beauty and Nothingness: Prairie as Failed Resource," *Landscape*, 27 (1983), 1-8, and J.B. Callicott, "Wetland Gloom and Wetland Glory," *Philosophy and Geography*, 6 (2003), 33-45; on modern formalist approaches, in general, see Carlson, "On the Possibility of Quantifying Scenic Beauty."

[13] M. Eaton, "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56 (1998), 149-156; see also H. Rolston "The Aesthetic Experiences of Forests," in A. Carlson and A. Berleant (eds), *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2004); Callicott, "Leopold's Land Aesthetic," *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*, 4 (1983), 329-332; S. Schauman, "The Garden and the Red Barn: The Pervasive Pastoral and its Environmental Consequences," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56 (1998), 181-

190; A. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac, with Essays on Conservation from Round River* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970).

[14] R. Stecker, "The Correct and the Appropriate in the Appreciation of Nature," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 37 (1997), 393-402.

[15] T. Leddy, "A Defense of Arts-Based Appreciation of Nature," *Environmental Ethics*, 27 (2005), 299-315, 304-5.

[16] Brook, "Wilderness in the English Garden Tradition," *Ethics and the Environment*, 13 (2008), 105-119. For similar views, see also D. Crawford, "Scenery and the Aesthetics of Nature," in A. Carlson and A. Berleant (eds), *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2004), and R. Paden, "A Defense of the Picturesque," *Environmental Philosophy* 10 (2013), 1-21.

[17] For a classic overview, see G. Rowley, *Principles of Chinese Painting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).

[18] M. Shaw, "Buddhist and Daoist Influences on Chinese Landscape Painting," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 49 (1988), 183-206.

[19] Rowley, *Principles of Chinese Painting*, 34.

[20] C.Y. Cheng, "Chinese Western Conceptions of Beauty and Good and their Cultural Implications," in K-H. Pohl (ed.), *Chinese Thought in a Global Context: A Dialogue Between Chinese and Western Philosophical Approaches* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 190-235. Similar ideas regarding the depiction of nature, as they occur in the context of Japanese art, are discussed by Y. Saito, "The Japanese Appreciation of Nature," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 25 (1985), 239-251, and B. Sandrissler, "Cultivating Commonplaces: Sophisticated Vernacularism in Japan," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998), 201-210.

[21] Quoted in Cheng, "Aesthetic Engagement, Ecosophy C, and Ecological Appreciation."

[22] Li and Ryan, "Nature, Engagement, Empathy: *Yijing* as a Chinese Ecological Aesthetics," 352.

[23] "Nature and Landscape in the Chinese Tradition," in P. Cheng, K. Fan (eds.), *New Perspectives on the Research of Chinese Culture* (Springer, 2013), p. 15.

[24] C.Y. Cheng, "Chinese Western Conceptions of Beauty and Good and their Cultural Implications," p. 197.

[25] Rowley, *Principles of Chinese Painting*, pp. 36-37.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[27] The importance of flowing vital energy" in the work, in addition to the visible pattern on the painted surface, is emphasized in the *Bifa ji*, a classical tenth-century treatise on landscape painting attributed to Jing Hao (trans. Stephen H. West, in *Ways with Words*, P. Yu et al eds (Berkeley: University of California, 2000), pp. 202-244.

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 51.

[29] C.Y. Cheng, "Chinese Western Conceptions of Beauty and Good and their Cultural Implications," 194-6; for a different explanation, however, see C. Tyler, and C. Chen, "Chinese perspective as a rational system: relationship to Panofsky's symbolic form," *Chinese Journal of Psychology*, 53 (2011), 7-27.

[30] Rowley *Principles of Chinese Painting*, p. 20.

[31] X. Cheng, "Aesthetic Engagement, Ecosophy C, and Ecological Appreciation."

[32] *Ibid.*; see also Li and Ryan, "Nature, Engagement, Empathy: *Yijing* as a Chinese Ecological Aesthetics," 357.

[33] X. Cheng, "Aesthetic Engagement, Ecosophy C, and Ecological Appreciation."

[34] For a general discussion of Daoism and issues relating to the treatment of the environment, see K.L. Lai, "Conceptual Foundations for Environmental Ethics: A Daoist Perspective," in J. Callicott and J. McRae (eds), *Environmental Philosophy in Asian Traditions of Thought* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014), pp. 173-196.

[35] Cheng, "Environmental Aesthetics and Ecological Aesthetics: Connections and Differences." Indeed, one of the stated motivations for Cheng's Ecoaesthetics is the "global ecological crisis." For further development of the practical dimensions of traditional Chinese aesthetics, see Chen, *Chinese Environmental Aesthetics*.

[36] Li and Ryan, "Nature, Engagement, Empathy: *Yijing* as a Chinese Ecological Aesthetics," p. 357.

[37] Cheng, "On the Four Cornerstones of Ecological Aesthetic Appreciation," p. 228.

[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 203, 231.

[39] Cheng, "Aesthetic Engagement, Ecosophy C, and Ecological appreciation."

[40] Another possible point of contact between the two conceptions of ecology is the notion of balance. However, the role of balance, and related notions such as stability and harmony, in recent ecology has been a matter of much debate, casting doubt on the idea of equating of the two conceptions; see D. Botkin, *Discordant Harmonies; A New Ecology for the Twenty-first Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[41] We thank two anonymous reviewers of *Contemporary Aesthetics* for their helpful comments and suggestions.
