

Looking at *looking*

Animal vision.

When animals look, what do they see? Animals do not look at the world. For how could they? Animals are *in* the world, present and acting. More than *at*, animals look *for*.

Again: when animals look, what do they look for? Doubling themselves, animals always look for animals. Sometimes animals see nothing but plants, sometimes they see nothing but rocks. Sometimes it rains. Sometimes the sun stings their eyes. Still, animals always look for animals.

When animals look, they sometimes see other animals. Catching a glimpse of a pair of eyes, animals see two outcomes: a friend or a foe, a mate or prey.

Human vision.

When humans look, what do they see? Humans look at the world. Humans look at pictures of the world, imagining that the world is still. Imagining that the world is something to look at. Humans double, being humans and animals. As animals, humans are *in* the world, present and acting. As animals, humans look *for*, more than *at*.

Again: when humans look, what do they look for? As animals, humans look for other animals. Sometimes humans see nothing but plants, sometimes they see nothing but rocks. Sometimes it rains. Sometimes the sun stings their eyes. Still, humans – as animals – always look for animals.

Catching a glimpse of a pair of eyes, humans see two outcomes: someone to run from or someone to chase, someone to fuck or someone to fear.

Camera vision.

When cameras look, what do they see? Cameras record the world. Cameras create pictures of the world, imaging a world that is still. Turning the world into something to look at. Cameras double, being cameras and tools for humans. As tools, cameras look *for*, more than *at*.

Again, when cameras look, what do they look for? Through the viewfinder photographers – as humans, as animals – look for what animals look for. Catching a glimpse of a pair of eyes, the facial detection algorithm in digital cameras set in. There are two outcomes: face detected or face undetected, animal in focus or animal in blur.

Sometimes cameras see nothing but plants, sometimes they see nothing but rocks. Sometimes it rains. Sometimes the sun causes lens flare. Sun. Light. Cameras are devices for recording light. When cameras look, they look for light.

Plant vision.

When plants look, what do they see? Plants do not look at the world. For how could they? Plants have no eyes, just as animals have no leaves.¹ Plants are in the world, present, but never still. Plants are growing and acting. Plants need senses to orient themselves, to know where to stretch.

Again, if plants look – without eyes – what do they look for? When plants look – without eyes – they look for light. Sometimes it rains. Sometimes the sun burns their leaves. As the day dawns, the plant stretches towards the light. As the light dies out in the evening, the plant goes to sleep.

To know when to wake and when to sleep, plants need rudimentary sight. Seeing without eyes, means never seeing eyes. Still, there are two outcomes: light or no light, the blue light of the day or the red of the dusk and dawn.

Vision vision.

When looking looks, what does it see? Looking does not look at the world. For how could it? Looking needs no eyes, just as the camera needs no photographer. Looking anticipates visibility, foreseeing seeing. More than *at*, looking looks *for*.

Again, if looking looks, what does it look for? Perhaps human vision and animal vision – as camera vision and plant vision – is looking for light? Sometimes it rains. Sometimes the sun lets eyes see eyes.

Sometimes. Some things. Animals, humans, cameras, plants and vision all look for something, looking for some kind of affordance or hindrance. Catching a glimpse there are two outcomes: eyes seeing something or eyes seeing nothing, no-eyes seeing something or no-eyes seeing nothing. Something important or nothing important.

¹ Chamovitz, Daniel (2012): *What a Plant Knows: A Field Guide to the Senses of Your Garden – And Beyond*, New York: Scientific American/Farrar, Straus and Giroux: 27.