

The Art in Knowing a Landscape

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I. Introduction¹

It has been nearly half a century since philosophers began to turn their attention once again to the aesthetic appreciation of environment. At first their interest centered on nature, on recognizing and appreciating natural beauty. Evidence that humans have known and valued the experience of beauty in the natural world is coeval with the record of human activity, and it parallels the uneven course of history. We can find signs of an aesthetic sensibility in prehistoric art and artifacts and full recognition of aesthetic sensibility in many preliterate societies. This capacity has continued to manifest itself throughout the historical course of ancient civilizations and up to the present. In the modern era, aesthetic interest in nature became more focused in the seventeenth century, achieving disciplinary identity and structure by the end of the eighteenth, primarily in the work of Immanuel Kant, whose influence has shadowed much of the work done in aesthetics since then. Kant's interest lay more in natural beauty than in art, but this emphasis in aesthetic inquiry changed with the great flowering of the arts in Western Europe during the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, when aesthetics became identified with the philosophy of art.

A return to the aesthetics of nature began in the final decades of the twentieth century, with interest continuing and reinforced by the growing environmental crisis. Combined with the revival of interest in both natural and artistic beauty, the aesthetics of environment began to attract an increasing number of scholars, who recognized the distinctive contribution that aesthetics can make to environmental philosophy. At the same time, this aesthetic interest broadened and became increasingly inclusive. Aestheticians began to write about the city and, with the continuing urbanization of the world's population, urban aesthetics continues as a major focus. More recently, scholars have opened aesthetics to the environments of everyday life and to comparative aesthetics. Thus the range of environmental aesthetics has continued to deepen and expand.

One of the issues that scholars have debated concerns the implications for aesthetics of the differences among these different conditions of aesthetic enjoyment. Are we really speaking of the same thing when we write about the aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment and of the human environment? And are both of a different order yet from the appreciation of artistic excellence? As might be expected, scholars have advocated opposing answers to these questions. One thing that the differences between art and nature make clear is the fact that humans create art works but do not in any significant sense create natural objects. More importantly, this issue raises the

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question of where aesthetic value lies, and here environmental aesthetics has much to contribute. For what a concern with environment shows is that what is most significant is not the *object* of appreciation but the *process* of appreciation, that is, aesthetic experience. Environmental aesthetics thus shifts the focus of aesthetic value from the object, i.e. the work of art, to its perceiver. Nowhere is this clearer than in landscape appreciation, for landscape is both a favorite object for the appreciation of nature and a favorite subject for painters and a frequent subject for poets and novelists.

What I should like to explore here is the experience of landscape both through the arts and *as an art*, an art of environmental appreciation. A clearer understanding of landscape, environment, and art, as well as what it is to 'know' in the context of environmental experience, suggests how the arts can contribute to an intimate, engaged experience of landscape, and how this process itself can be construed as an art in which the perceiver is a quasi-artist.

I should like to do this through a re-weaving of words and ideas to propose a new fabric for understanding the relation of art, landscape, and perceiver. The threads I want to combine are four: *art, environment, landscape, and knowing in the sense of appreciation*. I hope to show how the loose-knit texture they form can be spread over a particular landscape in such a way that the landscape will fill the fabric and the fabric integrate the landscape. I realize that I may have over-worked my metaphor, so I shall leave it now, but I hope that it can serve as a guiding image for the relation and application of the ideas I shall be working with.

II. Landscape appreciation

Let me begin by posing a triad of questions: First, what is landscape experience and how can we describe it? Second, how do we experience landscape in the arts? And third, how do the arts relate to landscape experience? I realize that there are both descriptive and normative elements in these questions, but they are unavoidable, and it is better to acknowledge than ignore them. How, to begin, then, can we describe landscape experience?

In considering aesthetic appreciation, it is customary to select a key element in the aesthetic field, typically an art object such as a painting or musical work, and consider what distinguishes it from other, presumably more ordinary objects through its formal features, its presumptive aesthetic qualities, and its social or institutional role. This procedure would seem to objectify the process. A second common approach is to examine the appreciative response to such objects, typically its emotional component. Here the appeal to appreciative experience becomes an invitation to subjectivism. I think, however, that both the objectivist and the subjectivist consideration of aesthetic appreciation do the experience of landscape an injustice.

I want to argue instead that landscape appreciation is a holistic experience to which multiple factors contribute. One way to describe this has been to call it ecological, holding that place and participant merge in a situational context in which no element is independent of the others. This, moreover, can be claimed for aesthetic experience more generally, whether of art or nature. Landscape appreciation offers an important challenge to the prevailing view of the subjectivity of experience in Western philosophy. Considering appreciative experience subjectively or objectively is neither pure nor clear: both approaches incorporate unintended assumptions and adopt an inverted order.

This is not the place to engage in a general critique of aesthetic inquiry, but it will return us to the landscape by pointing out that these two views share a common misdirection. It is to begin with a methodology that divides the question into easily identifiable parts and focuses inquiry on them individually. While this procedure has proved effective in certain kinds of investigations, most

notably at the early stages of inquiry in the physical sciences, it has been less successful in the social sciences and even less so in the normative domain.

The shortcomings of this practice in aesthetic inquiry are sometimes acknowledged, and rest largely on the question-begging assumption that aesthetic objects and responses can be understood individually before being related. This procedure is circular because what is at issue is how the experience is to be understood. To think that this question can be answered by dealing with each in turn is already to prescribe a particular kind of answer. This also points out the inverted order of such an inquiry, for whatever else may be said of landscape (or any other) appreciation, it does not come in parts but emerges in a situational context in which the activity of appreciation is embedded and to which it contributes.

Obviously, then, any specific description of landscape appreciation will reflect the particular conditions of its occurrence: what, when, where, and by whom. But it is possible to identify some generic features of such occasions. Let me suggest heuristically that we can say at the very least that landscape appreciation occurs in a context involving (for present purposes) a human perceiver in a location.² Understanding this situation as an integral whole and not a composite of separate parts is particularly apposite for understanding landscape appreciation, since this is true on every occasion of appreciating landscape. And it does not presume any particular kind of landscape: similar considerations apply whether the landscape be a wilderness, a countryside, a marine environment, or an urban one.

Whatever else can be said follows, I think, from this initial condition of wholeness. It recognizes that the appreciator is *in* the landscape, *an integral part* of the landscape, and not an external spectator. We do not enter a landscape. Being in a landscape is not like entering a room, a liminal progression into a distinct and separate place. We find ourselves there, here, part of it. It is an experience of being present and, by one's presence, contributing to the formation of the landscape and to its unique tonality. This is rather like Wallace Stevens' jar in Tennessee:

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill,
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill.

.....

It took dominion everywhere.

(‘Anecdote of the Jar’, in Stevens 1954: 76–77).

Like the jar, a human presence creates the landscape. In its absence we do not have a landscape; we have a geographical area.

It is important to recognize, too, that landscape experience is predominately perceptual. More than visual, it involves the dynamic presence of the body with its full range of sensory awareness. The convenient handful of receptors that common sense distinguishes is often grouped into two separate categories, the distance receptors and the contact receptors. The visual sense allows us to discern light, color, shape, pattern, movement, and distance, with its corresponding abstraction, space. Through hearing we grasp sounds as noise or pitch, the latter qualified by timbre, dynamic level, order, sequence, rhythm and other patterns. These are the distance receptors, and philosophic custom has identified sight and hearing as the aesthetic senses, since they allow a kind of unperurbed reflection so long associated with ideal beauty. But these sensory channels do not stand alone nor are they separate e.

To introduce the other senses into aesthetic perception we must overcome established tradition, for relying on the close involvement of the body disrupts the disinterested contemplation

traditionally considered essential for aesthetic pleasure. This is an unfortunate division of the senses, especially for the perception of environment, from which we can never distance ourselves, since it requires our presence and participation.³ The contact receptors are just as much part of the human sensorium as the distal and are actively involved in environmental experience. The olfactory sense is intimately present in our awareness of place and time, and even the sense of taste can contribute to that consciousness, as we discover from the mnemonic resonances that certain tastes and smells evoke. Tactile experience, moreover, is not as simple as we may think. It belongs to the haptic sensory system, which encompasses both the tactual and the subcutaneous perception of surface texture, contour, pressure, temperature, humidity, pain, and visceral sensation. It also includes other sensory channels usually overlooked or confounded with touch that are different in important respects. The kinesthetic sense involves muscular awareness and skeletal or joint sensation through which we perceive position and solidity by the degree of resistance that surfaces project: hard, soft, sharp, blunt, firm, yielding. And we grasp body movement indirectly through the vestibular system: the awareness of climbing and descending, turning and twisting, encountering obstruction and free passage.

Equally important as discriminating the sensory range of environmental perception is recognizing synaesthesia, which includes among its meanings the fusion of the sense modalities. These different perceptual courses are distinguishable only on reflection, in analysis, or under experimental conditions, and not in the directness of immediate experience. More forcefully than in any other situation, environmental perception engages the entire, functionally interactive human sensorium in a process through which we become part of our environment in an interpenetration of body and place.

III. Experiencing landscape in the arts

This brief account of landscape experience obviously needs to be elaborated. To proceed further we need to develop both its situational aspects and its perceptual ones. One way to begin this is by turning to the second question I mentioned earlier: How do we experience landscape *in the arts*? Like all such empirical questions, a full answer requires careful investigation, but it is also a theoretical question and includes considering the kinds of data that can be adduced to support an answer. Among these data are descriptive presentations of landscape in art. So let me turn to the artistic-aesthetic employment of landscape.

Artists have long been drawn to the landscape, and it is easiest to start with the visual arts, more particularly with landscape painting. Now you may suppose that I have been speaking of landscape in the usual way as a physical array lying before an appreciative spectator: A visual spectacle, or a visual object, as it were. This, however, is not at all the case and on several counts.

Let us begin by acknowledging that identifying something as a landscape is learned, and learned at a fairly sophisticated level. We begin teaching infants at the very first to recognize objects: a finger, a ball, and later, a person. And so we are quickly led to know the world as comprised of objects. This is carried over to the understanding of landscape paradigmatically as an object, as a broad scenic array that we are expected to stand back to admire. But although landscape is usually assimilated into the world of objects, it is not an object like these others. We must demarcate its boundaries, an approach to landscape appreciation once cultivated in the eighteenth century by looking through a Claude glass. It is a technique that still persists in looking at landscape in the form of photographs and paintings or, more deliberately, by looking through the viewfinder of a camera. It is a process easily transferred to the appreciation of actual landscapes and encouraged by designating certain locations as scenic views and even going so far as to identify specific locations as 'picture points' or 'photo points.'

Yet we must not confine ourselves to looking *at* the landscape. It is now well-understood how the pervasive visual metaphor can constrict and distort the character of experience, in this case by translating the full multiply sensory experience into a visual, surface. For *looking at* a landscape is not the complete experience and, indeed, looking is but one *aspect* of the experience. What may happen as the experience develops is rather a dynamic interplay between viewer and landscape as we extend ourselves into the landscape, looking not *at* but from *within* the landscape, feeling its physical magnetism as it works with our bodies from every direction, and a kinesthetic sense of the landscape as something to be entered, engaged with and worked through, embraced physically, perhaps rather like swimming in the landscape.⁴ Kandinsky recalled such an immersive environmental experience, what I call aesthetic engagement, in this case of a room, that he had on a visit to the Vologda district in Russia, an experience so vivid that it made a permanent impression:

In these wonderful houses I experienced something that has never repeated itself since. They taught me to move in the *picture*, to live in the picture. I still remember how I entered the room for the first time and stopped short on the threshold before the unexpected vision When I finally entered the room, I felt myself surrounded on all sides by painting into which I had thus penetrated. Probably not otherwise than through these impressions did my further desires take shape within me, the aims of my own art. I have for many years searched for the possibility of letting the viewer ‘stroll’ in the picture, forcing him to forget himself and dissolve into the picture. (Kandinsky 1964: 31)

Such environmental experiences are not confined to the visual arts but occur in the others, as well. Focusing on the haptic and kinesthetic sensory systems suggests the art of dance, an art that generates aesthetic experience largely from the possibilities that these sensory modalities offer. Movement and touch have directness and immediacy, spatial specificity, and peculiarly insistent, experiential qualities that dance shares with physical engagement in environment. In this sense virtually all dance is environmental experience, bodies moving in surrounding, inclusive, and created space. There are times when dance incorporates specific movements common in environmental experience, such as walking and running. No more explicit examples of this can be found than in the choreography of Merce Cunningham. His dance, ‘How to Pass, Kick, Fall and Run,’ is comprised of these common movements, and just plain walking is a central feature in many of his dances. Cunningham is hardly alone in using walking as dance movement. Walking may be integrated into the dramatic structure of dance, as in Orpheus’ hesitating, tortured passage out of the underworld in Balanchine’s ballet. Balanchine used it again in ‘Prodigal Son,’ when the prodigal’s return bears no resemblance to his earlier energetic swagger as he dissolves from a staggering walk to a slithering, repentant crawl toward his father. What I mean to suggest is that the dance art refines the same kinesthetic sensibilities that are bound up in all somatic experience, including the forms it assumes in the landscape. It is perhaps more odd *to speak* of landscape as a dance than to experience it as a dance.

Musical experience shares some interesting properties with dance, and there is a suggestive parallel between environmental space and acoustical space. Indeed, the two are never entirely separate. John Cage was especially influential in making us conscious of the ambient sound that is ever-present, and even when there is no audible or identifiable external source, inner audition fills the sound space. The spatial character of sound, aided by its intangibility and unboundedness, has long attracted composers as far back as the Italian Renaissance when, in the sixteenth century, Adrian Willaert and later Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli made use of the great resonant acoustical space of St Mark’s Cathedral, exploiting the two choir lofts on either side of the main altar to develop the celebrated Venetian antiphonal style.

Composers have sometimes written musical compositions that embody sound experiences intended to characterize individual places, scenes, and events. Many nineteenth-century tone poems carry such an association, such as Smetana's *The Moldau*, Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*, and Debussy's *La Mer*. Debussy seems to have had a special affinity for the sound quality of different environments, and this is documented by the titles of many of his *Preludes for Piano* and other works.⁵ Perhaps such works might be called landscape music, although it would be wise not to try to establish too literal a connection between the music and the landscape. Environmental resources and sounds have been rediscovered by many contemporary composers, who exploit the possibilities inherent in electronic technology, as in the placement of microphones and speakers, and the different sources of sound when recorded and live music are combined. Not only have soundscapes been used by composers; they have also become in their own right the subject of environmental research. The burgeoning field of sound studies systematically investigates the dimensions of environmental sounds characteristic of different locations and historical periods.⁶

Let me turn finally, in this partial review of the arts, to literature, perhaps the most indirect, yet by that fact the most evocative of the environmental arts. Descriptions in literature can evoke the experience of places. Obviously these experiences are not themselves actual, although perhaps they might be called, with tongue-in-cheek, 'literal.' What I mean to say is that they are real, not as *locations* but as *experiences* of locations. What is distinctive about such experiences, both within and outside literature, is the way they center on sensory experience that is grounded in the human body situated in a distinctive location. This complex field of perceptual experience involves an engagement of person and environment and it invariably includes the influence of social patterns and cultural ethos.

It is important to distinguish between literary descriptions as *evocations* of place and literary descriptions as place *experiences*. Of the innumerable examples in literature, Thomas Hardy's novels offer many descriptions of rural landscapes that create place experience. In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the aesthetic becomes an integral dimension of an agricultural landscape, as Gabriel Oak discovered on his way to Shottsford:

The road stretched through water-meadows traversed by little brooks, whose quivering surfaces were braided along their centres, and folded into creases at the sides; or, where the flow was more rapid, the stream was pied with spots of white froth, which rode on in undisturbed serenity. On the higher levels the dead and dry carcasses of leaves tapped the ground as they bowled along helter-skelter upon the shoulders of the wind, and little birds in the hedges were rustling their feathers and tucking themselves in comfortably for the night, retaining their places if Gabriel (Oak) kept moving, but flying away if he stopped to look at them. He passed by Yal-bury Wood where the game-birds were rising to their roosts, and heard the crack-voiced cock-pheasants' 'cu-uck, cuck,' and the wheezy whistle of the hens. (Hardy 1960: 48)

It is interesting to note that what assists especially in creating the scene here is Hardy's reliance on the details of environmental sounds – water, leaves, birds' feathers and voices. Indeed, Hardy's novels offer landscape descriptions so evocative that they often create a scene in which the reader becomes a virtual part. One thinks of the cottage and garden described in *The Woodlanders* (1996: 94), the village of Marlott and its environs in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1893: 7–8, 93–94) and, with especial brilliance, Egdon Heath in *The Return of the Native* (1994: 3–6, 178, 199–200).¹

An explicit account of such an experience of engagement with the landscape occurs in Henry James' *The Ambassadors*, where James assimilates landscape into painting:

He had taken the train . . . to a station . . . to give the whole [day] ... to that French ruralism, with its cool special green, into which he had hitherto looked only through the little oblong window of the picture-frame He could thrill a little at the chance of seeing something somewhere that would remind him of a certain small Lambinet that had charmed him, long years before, at a Boston dealer's [on Tremont Street] The train pulled up just at the right spot The oblong gilt frame disposed its enclosing lines; the poplars and willows, the reeds and river . . . fell into a composition, full of felicity, within them; the sky was silver and turquoise and varnish; the village on the left was white and the church on the right was grey; it was all there, in short – it was what he wanted: it was Tremont Street, it was France, it was Lambinet. Moreover he was freely walking about in it. He did this last, for an hour, to his heart's content, making for the shady woody horizon and boring so deep into his impression and his idleness that he might fairly have got through them again and reached the maroon-coloured wall ... towards six o'clock, he found himself [in] a village that affected him as a thing of whiteness, blueness and crookedness, set in coppery green, and that had the river flowing behind or before it . . . at the bottom . . . of the inn-garden. He had had other adventures before this . . . and had meanwhile not once overstepped the oblong gilt frame. (James 1960: 318–323; see Berleant 1991, ch. 3)

Arts other than dance, painting, music, and literature can also figure in landscape experience, each in distinctive ways, arts such as architecture, sculpture, photography and film. I think, though, that the case has been made sufficiently for our present purposes.

IV. Landscape arts and landscape experience

When we turn to the third question, *How do the arts relate to landscape experience most generally?*, we come closer to what may be central to the connection between art and landscape. Let me begin with some reflections on landscape appreciation.

It is often noted that appreciating a work of art involves more than looking at a painting, hearing a piece of music, reading a poem, or seeing a dance or a theatrical performance. Appreciation has to be learned, to be cultivated. And it follows from this that the character or quality or even the form of appreciation may differ sharply from one historical period to another, from one cultural tradition to another, and from one individual to another. Developing skill in appreciation is much like developing any skill: one learns by instruction, by emulation, and by an unending process of varied experiences whose depth may continue to increase and whose resonances to resound. The question of whether there is a similarity or a discontinuity between appreciating art and appreciating nature is a misleading problem, a consequence of making the object central rather than the actual experience.⁸

Moreover, the process does not go from art to nature, as Wilde had it, or from nature to art, an order that Plato condemned. It is, rather, reciprocal, each nourishing the other. But let me cast this in a somewhat different way. Unlike Orpheus' ascent from Hades, where there could be no turning back, landscape appreciation, whether of nature or of art, requires constant turning, each return being to a different landscape. And each return is to ourselves, as well. Ultimately, art and nature are inseparable. Again in Wallace Stevens's words,

Unfretted by day's separate, several selves, Being part of everything come together as one. ('An Ordinary Evening in New Haven,' in Stevens 1954: 482)

It is important not to lose touch with the landscape, the landscape we are experiencing. For we do not experience *landscape*, we cannot appreciate landscape generically. Moreover, there is no landscape; there are only landscapes. And there is no landscape art as such; there are only

occasions in which a real or depicted landscape is central in aesthetic experience. I think of this as a field experience (no *double entendre* intended), an aesthetic field whose two central factors are an artistic event and a specific location. While two in number, they figure as parts of the same integral experience.

So my question now becomes: What happens in the juxtaposition of an artistic occurrence with a specific natural landscape? This is not a general question of the relation of art to landscape but a particular one of the relation of this artistic event and this particular landscape. Of course these questions, both general and specific, cannot be answered in a word but it is nonetheless crucial to identify and distinguish them. For how we understand aesthetic appreciation makes all the difference in how we think the appreciation of art bears on the appreciation of a natural scene. Rather than considering the general question of how the appreciation of the one relates to the appreciation of the other, let us ask, rather: What does the experience of landscape in art *do* to the experience of actual landscape, and, conversely, how does the experience of real landscapes affect the experience of landscape in art? We may find that here may be where the experience of landscape in art and, if I may say, of landscape art, illuminate each other.

Consider dance. The experience of landscape can enlarge dance perception and, conversely, dance perception affects the experience of landscape, both of these centering on the movement of body in space. For the appreciative experience of dance can alert and enhance our enjoyment of landscape, and that of landscape our pleasure in dance. Both, moreover, share something with cinematic art, an art that orders space with its constituent visual and motile accompaniments. It is what happens as we walk along an earthen path, feeling the contours and resilience of the soil beneath our feet, the grazing touch of grass, leaf, and twig, the pressure of the breeze, the warmth of sun on skin, the fragrance of the earthy mold and the vegetation. Of course, a country walk or forest hike is not dancing through the landscape, but I suspect that a similar dynamic occurs.

V. Knowing landscape

Let me turn, finally, to the question of meaning, to what we mean by landscape and what landscape means. I have been puzzling over the complex dialectic between landscape and art, and between the aesthetics of landscape and the aesthetics of landscape art, and there are no clear channels along which we can move. When we admire a particular landscape, we may now wonder whether it is that landscape we are admiring or the landscape an artist has taught us to appreciate. Viewing a cathedral in a rural setting, do we see what is before us or, once having seen Constable's painting of Salisbury Cathedral, is our view more like a transparency through which we dimly perceive the painted cathedral? How can we avoid the shadow of Monet's haystacks when we observe the mounds of hay on a fall drive in the countryside or regard the Houses of Parliament across the Thames through the fog or at sunset without recalling his imagery? Is it possible to view a great, dramatic tree without the influence of van Ruysdael? We can easily mention an endless stream of paintings whose images, once seen, populate the actual landscapes we experience.

I mention these examples not to corroborate Wilde's half-truth that nature imitates art but to raise a more complex question or, rather, a question of a different complex. This is not the unresolvable issue of resemblance in how art concerned with or directed toward landscapes is related to the actual landscape. Put in this way sets off a fruitless debate. Nor is it the converse of the simple order of imitation, the corresponding question raised by going from the image to the landscape itself. It is rather to recall my third question and ask: How do the landscape arts relate to our experience of natural and human landscapes? And conversely, what do our experiences of landscapes bring to the arts of landscape? For asked in that way, we can suggest that we learn to

recognize and appreciate actual landscapes by appreciating those in art. Yet at the same time our experiences of actual landscapes affect how we experience those in art. In fact, putting the issue in the form of a relationship between two distinct and separate things, or between two pairs of relationships, tends to distort the issue and confound the question.

We are now in a better position to reconsider and bypass entirely the issue of whether there is a similarity or a discontinuity between appreciating art and appreciating a natural landscape, or whether the experience of one influences the experience of the other. I would like, instead, to suggest a different way of approaching the question. Instead of beginning with two presumably dissimilar situations and hence two dissimilar experiences, it would be more helpful and, I think, sounder to begin with one: appreciative experience. Then to the question of landscape appreciation we can give a different response and it is this: the appreciation of landscape constitutes a unitary experience, whether in art or in nature. It only becomes a problem if we start inquiry by separating the two, nature and art, and turning them into *objects* of appreciation. The question disappears when we begin with the *appreciation* of a landscape rather than a *landscape* for appreciation. This is no clever substitution of one puzzle for another but it actually implicates a matter of human ontology. And for this, the matter of landscape appreciation may be profoundly instructive because it is a vivid example of being human, being human in the landscape, *being in the human world*.

Introducing an ontological dimension at this point may seem both adventitious and uncalled for. After all, this discussion presumably concerns landscape experience, landscape appreciation, and not the metaphysics of being. Yet the connection is more than casual, for experience is a primary mode of human being, and this is integral to *being* taken in a more general sense. We face here a far larger conceptual canvas than the one onto which we have been projecting the landscape, and it warrants its own full consideration, certainly more than I can give it here. Perhaps the present discussion can be considered something of a preface to that larger concern.

Still another dimension should be included to gain a fuller grasp of aesthetic appreciation and, through it, of human being itself, and this involves the matter of knowing. There is, I believe, a kind of knowing of landscape that describes this appreciation. It is not knowing in the factual or scientific sense as a logical relation among abstractions or as an empirically-grounded factual generalization. Indeed, it is not knowing in the abstract, at all; it is knowing in the concrete, and such knowing is always of particulars. Deleuze (1994: 249) has written: ‘The highest generalities of life... point beyond species and genus, but point beyond them in the direction of the individual and pre-individual singularities rather than towards an impersonal abstraction.’ This kind of thinking resembles Bergson’s description of knowing from the inside, not externally but from within (*An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 1903). In the context of landscape experience we could describe this as a kind of bodily knowing, body knowledge. And it is, to use Heideggerian language, a way of ‘being-in-the-world,’ not knowing from the outside, externally, but from within, from the inside, directly. This closely resembles the inarticulable body knowledge of the athlete, the dancer, and the musician who ‘knows’ when something is ‘right’ because it ‘feels’ right through sensing it with one’s body, with one’s full being.

It is in this way that appreciation is a kind of knowing. Humboldt (1987) maintained that the aesthetic enjoyment of nature through the arts, especially through the depiction of natural scenery, enables man to transcend the purely objective domain of the scientific delineation of nature. ‘In order to depict nature in its exalted sublimity, we must not dwell exclusively on its external manifestations but must trace its image’ as it is reflected in the mind and the feelings of man. Appreciation is this entering into the experience as direct knowing, knowing that is engaged and replete. Its aesthetic is what makes a place come alive as a presence to those who live, work, or visit it.

This movement to ontology is thus no mere digression but is very much germane to landscape experience, and this experience, in turn, tells us much about what it is to be in the world. At the same time such a view of the issue carries us beyond landscape appreciation, indeed, beyond appreciation altogether. It not only rescues aesthetic appreciation from being consigned to a subjectivity that is inaccessible and irrational; it rehabilitates aesthetics as a philosophical discipline with roots that reach its deepest layers, offering a different, fruitful ground on which to inquire. It is an aesthetics that informs ontology and, if I may say, an ontology that informs aesthetics. With this we arrive at new terrain where a different philosophical landscape lies before us.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this essay was presented on June 13, 2008 as a lecture in the research project *Re-enchantment and Reclamation, New Perceptions of Morecambe Bay through Dance, Film and Sound* conducted during 2007 and 2008 by The Landscape & Environment Group of the Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts (LICA).
Philosophical interest in the aesthetics of environment has been developing for nearly half a century and its literature has been growing. This is much too large to offer anything but a few important sources in which extensive bibliographies also may be found: See Berleant (1992), Berleant and Carlson (2007), Brady (2003), Carlson (2009), Carlson and Berleant (2003), Hepburn (2001).
2. To circumscribe the issues more clearly, I am deliberately avoiding the question of aesthetic appreciation in non-human animals, although this is clearly relevant to a full discussion. See, for example, Welsch (2004) and Snaevarr (2004).
3. I develop an extended critique of distance and disinterestedness in Berleant (2004).
4. I have written at greater length about the experience of landscape painting in *Art and Engagement* (Berleant 1991), ch. 3: 'The Viewer in the Landscape,' from which some of these quotations are taken.
5. These include 'Voiles,' 'Le vent dans la plaine,' 'Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir,' 'Les collines d'Anacapri,' 'Des pas sur la neige,' 'Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest,' 'La cathédrale engloutie,' 'Brouillards,' 'Feuilles mortes,' 'Bruyères,' 'La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune,' and 'Feux d'artifice.' Other 'environmental' works by Debussy are 'Jardins sous la pluie' and 'Clair de lune,' along with many additional pieces for piano and instrumental combinations.
6. In his landmark study, *The Tuning of the World*, R. Murray Schafer distinguishes keynote sound (the characteristic, prevalent sound), sound signal (the foreground sound), and soundmark (a sound that is characteristic of an area). For more recent work see also Järviluoma and Wagstaff (2002).
7. One can find similar passages in *Jude the Obscure*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and *Far from the Madding Crowd*.
8. The question of whether there is a difference between appreciating nature and appreciating art has been discussed by Berleant (1993), Carlson (1993), and by Emily Brady (2003: 60–70).

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