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The Aesthetics of Natural Environments

*The Aesthetics of
Natural Environments*



Edited by
Allen Carlson and Arnold Berleant



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Preface

As we observe in the introduction to this volume, the contemporary treatment of the aesthetics of nature is of relatively recent origin. Prior to Ronald Hepburn's groundbreaking "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty," the subject was almost nonexistent in twentieth-century philosophical aesthetics. The essays gathered in this collection present some of the main ideas and themes concerning the aesthetics of nature that have been developed in the wake of Hepburn's essay. Together they give what we believe is a reasonably clear and accurate picture of the present state of discussion within the field.

Nonetheless, limitations of space have kept us from including all those who have made important contributions to this new area of research. We attempt to remedy this situation, at least in part, by discussing the views of many of these individuals in the introduction to the volume. The introduction gives an overview of the development of the field and situates within the discussion most of its key contributors. Likewise, we have not been able to include within the main body of the volume all the themes that are pursued in the contemporary discussion of the aesthetics of nature. Again, as in the case of individual contributors, we mention many of these themes in the introduction.

The introduction also provides an extensive set of notes that offers additional information on issues and individuals. These notes cite much of the important research in the field and are designed to allow the reader to follow up both the ongoing thought of individual contributors and the continuing investigation of particular themes. We have opted for this method of citing significant primary and secondary sources, since we think it more informative and useful than a standard bibliography.

We hope that the introduction and especially the collection of essays itself will provide a fruitful entry into what we believe is an important and rewarding area of philosophical research.

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We also thank Don LePan, the president of Broadview Press, for encouraging us to edit the volume, and his editorial staff, especially Julia Gaunce, for their assistance and advice concerning its preparation for publication.

Last but not least, we express our appreciation for the support and encouragement of our respective universities, colleagues, friends, and families.

Introduction: The Aesthetics of Nature

Allen Carlson and Arnold Berleant



I. Introduction

The aesthetics of nature is the initiating and central focus of environmental aesthetics, one of the two or three major new fields of aesthetics to emerge in the second half of the twentieth century. Environmental aesthetics considers philosophical issues concerning the aesthetic appreciation of the world at large and, moreover, the world as constituted not simply by particular objects but also by larger units, such as landscapes, environments, and ecosystems. Thus the field extends beyond the confines of the artworld and our aesthetic appreciation of works of art. Its scope covers the aesthetic appreciation of non-artistic artifacts and natural objects, as well as the appreciation of both natural environments and our various human-influenced and human-created environments.¹

This collection of essays, however, focuses on only that part of environmental aesthetics that considers the aesthetic appreciation of the natural world. It concerns philosophical issues about the appreciation of nature, addressing matters such as the exact nature of both the natural world and the modes of aesthetic appreciation appropriate for it. This renewed interest in the aesthetics of the natural world has developed only recently. Nonetheless, it has historical roots in earlier work on the aesthetics of nature. To fully appreciate the recent and contemporary research in this area, it is useful to briefly examine this historical background and the developments that follow from it.²

II. The Background to the Current Interest in the Aesthetics of Nature

The historical roots of the interest in the aesthetics of nature lie in the ideas concerning aesthetic appreciation developed in the eighteenth century by British and Scottish philosophers, such as Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Burke, and Alison, and solidified by Kant.³ Central to this approach is the concept of disinterestedness.⁴ The basic idea of disinterestedness is that aesthetic appreciation requires appreciators to abstract themselves and the objects of their appreciation from their own interests, such as the personal, the possessive, and the economic. Coupling the concept of disinterestedness with the eighteenth century fascination with the natural world resulted in a rich tradition of landscape appreciation. With the aid of

disinterestedness, not only could domesticated, rural countrysides be seen as beautiful, but even the wildest of natural environments could be appreciated as sublime. Moreover, between the two extremes of the beautiful and the sublime, disinterestedness made space for the emergence of an even more powerful mode of landscape appreciation, the picturesque.⁵ The picturesque mode, although initially tied to particular sorts of landscapes, ultimately developed so as to facilitate the aesthetic appreciation of other kinds of environments by means of focusing attention on the picture-like properties of sensuous surface and formal composition. The upshot was an eighteenth century aesthetic synthesis having disinterestedness as the central theoretical concept, landscapes as the paradigm objects of aesthetic appreciation, and formalistic, picturesque appreciation as the favored mode of appreciation.

The eighteenth century aesthetic synthesis, however, does not come down to the present completely intact, and the current state of the philosophical study of the aesthetics of nature is as much a function of the changes it undergoes as of the synthesis itself. Chief among these changes are the ascendance of works of art and the decline of landscapes as paradigm objects of aesthetic appreciation. This shift in emphasis may be traced to a number of sources, such as the solidification of the so-called modern system of the arts,⁶ the prominence given to art as opposed to nature in Hegel's philosophical system, and the expanded importance of the artificial as opposed to the natural in Western civilization as a whole. Whatever the causes, however, and in spite of the Romantic period's seeming infatuation with nature, the overall result is that the philosophical study of the aesthetic appreciation of the natural world has been increasingly marginalized. And appreciation of nature itself, under the lingering spell of the picturesque, ultimately becomes limited largely to the appreciation of those landscapes especially suited for disinterested, formalistic appreciation: scenic views with picture-like sensuous and formal properties.

Although lacking the natural world as their main focus, the other key elements of the eighteenth century synthesis—disinterestedness and the formalistic mode of appreciation—nonetheless survive into the twentieth century. In fact, at the beginning of the century each is given renewed life, as exemplified by the classic reinterpretation of disinterestedness in Edward Bullough's psychical distance theory and by the uncompromising formalism of Clive Bell's theory of art.⁷ Moreover, with Bullough and Bell the theoretical marginalization of the aesthetic appreciation of anything other than art is strongly reaffirmed. Although Bullough mentions the appreciation of fog at sea, his main example is *Othello* and psychical distance is designed to function primarily in the appreciation of art. Bell is even more extreme in the exclusiveness of his focus on art, suggesting that the paradigmatic aesthetic response, a special aesthetic emotion, is typically evoked only by works of art.

The relevance of the early twentieth century re-entrenchment of disinterestedness and formalism to the current interest in the aesthetics of nature is to be found,

somewhat ironically, in the fact that a major theme of mid-twentieth century philosophical aesthetics involves the rejection of both disinterestedness and formalism. The rejection begins with the development of the expressionist theory of art and reaches its climax in the institutional theory of art.⁸ At the same time disinterestedness and formalism also come under increasing pressure from artists who affirm the continuity of art and life in their works, as well as from philosophers who find in these developments the basis for other new directions in aesthetics.⁹ The result is a change in the concept of the aesthetic appreciation of art significant enough to be thought of as a paradigm shift: At one extreme is the old idea of disinterested contemplation of the sensuous and formal properties of isolated and solitary objects of art and, at the other, the new paradigm of emotionally and cognitively rich engagement with cultural artifacts, intentionally created by designing intellects, informed by both art historical traditions and art critical practices, and deeply embedded in a complex, many-faceted artworld.

This paradigm shift results in a problem that directly impacts the development of the aesthetics of nature. The problem is that the new paradigm is a paradigm for the aesthetic appreciation of *art*. Moreover, it is a paradigm seemingly exclusive to art appreciation, for few, if any, of the resources introduced to replace those inherent in the doctrines of disinterestedness and formalism have application to the appreciation of anything other than art. This is no surprise, for the new paradigm is developed explicitly within the context of philosophy of art, and the rejected Bulloughian and Bellian reincarnations of the old doctrines were especially tailored to accommodate works of art. The upshot is that the resources of the new paradigm—designing intellects, art historical traditions, art critical practices, the artworld itself—appear to have little relevance to the world beyond the artworld. Thus, the aesthetic appreciation of the natural world is left behind, seeming to involve at best only distanced contemplation of sensuous and formal properties.

III. The Rise of the Renewed Interest in the Aesthetics of Nature

In the second half of the twentieth century, this problem finds expression in two developments that constitute the immediate background to the renewed interest in the aesthetics of nature. The first is that, in developing and defending the new paradigm of aesthetic appreciation, analytic aesthetics apparently abandons any remaining interest in the aesthetics of anything other than art. The abandonment is institutionalized by virtually equating philosophical aesthetics with philosophy of art. The key resource book in the field at that time, Monroe Beardsley's 1958 text, *Aesthetics*, is subtitled *Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, and the two major North American anthologies of "readings in aesthetics," Joseph Margolis's 1962 and William Kennick's 1964 volumes, have the titles, respectively, *Philosophy Looks at the Arts* and *Art and Philosophy*.¹⁰ With a total of 1,527 pages among them, none of these three volumes, each a classic of its kind, even mentions the aesthetics of nature. Moreover, when alluded to by analytic aestheti-

cians, the appreciation of nature is frequently treated as basically subjective and, in comparison with that of art, lacking philosophical interest. This development reaches its extreme in the idea that not only is philosophical aesthetics equivalent to philosophy of art, but, moreover, aesthetic appreciation itself is limited to art. In line with the new paradigm of aesthetic appreciation and its apparently exclusive tie to art, some philosophers, such as Don Mannison and Robert Elliot, reach the conclusion that the appreciation of the natural world is simply not aesthetic.¹¹ Aesthetic appreciation, they argue, requires reference to features such as designing intellects, art historical traditions, and art critical practices, and thus nature, lacking such features, cannot be aesthetically appreciated. Needless to say, this position is problematic: the traditional view is that everything is open to aesthetic appreciation.¹²

The second development constituting the immediate background to the renewed interest in the aesthetics of nature involves the real world beyond both philosophical aesthetics and the artworld. It relates to the public awareness of the aesthetic quality and value of the natural environment that begins to evolve, especially in North America, early in the second half of the twentieth century.¹³ This awareness causes a difficulty, since, given the developments in philosophical aesthetics, individuals concerned about the aesthetics of the natural environment are left with few theoretical resources other than the old neo-picturesque paradigm of distanced contemplation of scenic views. This has two ramifications: On the one hand, many of those charged with addressing concerns about the aesthetic state and value of the environment—such as landscape architects, environmental planners, and landscape assessors—embrace assessment, planning, and design approaches that focus primarily on sensuous and formal properties of scenery.¹⁴ On the other hand, other individuals, best characterized as environmentalists, react negatively to the old paradigm itself as well as its utilization in assessment, planning, and design. They see the neo-picturesque paradigm as improperly accenting the scenic to the exclusion of the rest of the environment.¹⁵ Some flirt with the idea that aesthetic appreciation of nature is in general inherently superficial or anthropocentric and thus has little positive and perhaps even a negative influence on environmental issues.¹⁶

The renewed interest in the aesthetics of nature is in part a response to these two developments. This is evident in the title of the essay that almost single-handedly initiates the renewal: Ronald Hepburn's groundbreaking 1966 article, "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty."¹⁷ Reacting to the treatment of the appreciation of nature within analytic aesthetics, Hepburn argues that those features that other philosophers have seen as aesthetic deficiencies in the natural world and thus as reasons for deeming its appreciation subjective, superficial, and even non-aesthetic, are actually sources for a different kind of, and potentially very rich, aesthetic experience. He emphasize the fact that, since it is not constrained by things such as designing intellects, art historical traditions, and art critical practices, the natural world facilitates an open, engaging, and creative mode of appreciation. Moreover, he argues that, as in the appreciation of art, there is in

the appreciation of nature a movement from shallow and trivial to deep, serious aesthetic experience, and thus the open, engaging, creative mode of appreciation should be guided by our realizations about the real nature of the natural world.

In this way, Hepburn addresses both the problem of the differences between art and nature concerning the resources available for constituting aesthetic experience, and the problem of the appreciation of the natural environment being limited to the old paradigm of distanced contemplation of sensuous and formal properties. His essay puts in place the groundwork for a new paradigm for the aesthetic appreciation of nature, a paradigm that, in stressing both the openness of the natural environment and the significance of our realizations about it, allows for appreciation of the natural world that is as emotionally and as cognitively rich as is that of art. This new paradigm stands at the center of recent and contemporary research, not only on the aesthetics of nature but also in the whole field of environmental aesthetics. Its influence is reflected in many of the developments in the field that have occurred in the last part of the twentieth century.

IV. Recent and Contemporary Research in the Aesthetics of Nature

Some of the relatively early research that exemplifies the renewed interest in the aesthetics of nature focuses on more empirical and applied issues. This work parallels Hepburn's dissatisfaction with certain assumptions implicit in the old paradigm of distanced contemplation of sensuous and formal properties. It involves the critique of approaches that are directed toward meeting growing public concerns about the aesthetic state of the natural environment. For example, in articles published in the 1970s, Allen Carlson charges that landscape assessment, planning, and design techniques are inadequate in being fixated on picturesque-like scenery and overly committed to formalism.¹⁸ He argues that the debate over the aesthetic state of the environment frequently presupposes a narrow, superficial notion of aesthetic quality and value; and that, in general, research in this area seems to be operating in what geographer Jay Appleton calls, in a short but far-reaching 1975 essay, a "theoretical vacuum."¹⁹ The call to fill this vacuum results in two kinds of responses: on the one hand, attempts to provide sociobiological underpinnings for the aesthetic appreciation of nature, such as Appleton's own prospect-refuge theory,²⁰ and, on the other, a wide range of theoretical models of aesthetic response grounded in, for example, developmental and environmental psychology.²¹ In general, this kind of research is beyond the scope of this collection, but there are a number of overview articles concerning it²² as well as some useful anthologies.²³ In addition, there are ongoing attempts to link empirical and applied research with the philosophical study of the aesthetics of nature.²⁴

Even more so than the research focusing on empirical and applied issues, the philosophical work on the aesthetics of nature can be related to Hepburn's insights. Two initial developments can be distinguished. Each involves a reaction to one aspect of the old paradigm of the aesthetic appreciation as distanced contempla-

tion of sensuous and formal properties, and each is foreshadowed by a central theme in Hepburn's seminal essay. On the one hand, there is a rejection of the old paradigm's nearly exclusive focus on sensuous and formal properties and the pursuit of Hepburn's contention that the aesthetic appreciation of the natural world must be guided by our realizations about its real nature. On the other hand, there is a reaction against the traditional idea of aesthetic appreciation as disinterested, distanced contemplation and an endorsement of Hepburn's suggestion that the natural environment facilitates an open, engaging, and creative mode of appreciation.

The former of the two initial developments stresses the role of the cognitive in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. This cognitive line, as noted, is in part a response to the old appreciative paradigm's obsession with sensuous and formal properties. For example, in a 1974 essay, Mark Sagoff downplays these properties and instead calls attention to nature's expressive and symbolic properties.²⁵ The cognitive line of thought is developed more fully by Carlson who, in a series of articles beginning in the late 1970s, maintains that aesthetic appreciation of nature must be freed from archaic artistic approaches emphasizing formalistic appreciation of isolated objects and picturesque appreciation of scenery. Moreover, he contends that freeing the appreciation of nature from artistic approaches necessitates neither reducing it simply to sensuous and emotional responses nor abandoning it to superficial subjectivism. Rather the key to appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature lies in appreciating it for what it in fact is. Therefore, analogous to the way in which the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of art is cognitively informed by art history and art criticism, the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature must be cognitively informed by natural history and scientific understanding. Thus Carlson finds a central place in the aesthetic appreciation of the natural world for the knowledge provided by sciences such as geology, biology, and ecology.²⁶

The basic idea of grounding the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature in scientific knowledge has a variety of ramifications. It constitutes an ecological aesthetic in the tradition of Aldo Leopold and is relevant to concerns about environmental ethics.²⁷ Given its emphasis on science and objectivity, it helps to counter the worries that the aesthetic appreciation of nature must be inherently superficial, subjective, or anthropocentric. Moreover, it suggests a framework for landscape assessors, planners, and designers who are attempting to address public concerns about the aesthetic quality and value of environments, and thus helps to fill the above noted "theoretical vacuum." The approach also has ramifications in helping to explain the prominence of the position known as "positive aesthetics," which holds that pristine nature has only or primarily positive aesthetic properties. In linking the appreciation of nature to science, the approach suggests the possibility that positive aesthetic appreciation is nurtured by the scientific worldview, which increasingly interprets the natural world as having aesthetically positive properties such as order, balance, unity, and harmony. The positive aesthetics thesis is considered in a growing body of literature, which is, however, too extensive to be covered within this collection.²⁸

The second of the initial philosophical developments in the aesthetics of nature involves a reaction against the traditional concept of aesthetic appreciation as disinterested contemplation and an endorsement of the idea that the natural environment facilitates an open, engaging, and creative mode of appreciation. Consequently, it parallels some of the developments that helped to clear the ground for the new paradigm of art appreciation, primarily analytic aesthetics' attack on both the Bulloughian and other more recent reincarnations of disinterestedness, such as the aesthetic attitude theory.²⁹ However, since the institutional resources of the artworld that replaced disinterestedness seem appropriate only for art, the rejection of the distanced contemplation paradigm for the aesthetic appreciation of nature requires further argumentation. In a series of articles culminating in two volumes published in the early 1990s, Arnold Berleant addresses this issue by stressing the similarities between the appreciation of art and of nature. He rejects not only disinterestedness but also various other artworld-related dogmas that place art on a pedestal separating it from the world at large. Thus Berleant sets the issue on its head, modeling the appreciation of art on the open, engaging, creative appreciation that is facilitated by the natural environment. He proposes what he terms an "aesthetics of engagement" as the paradigm for the appreciation of both nature and art. The aesthetics of engagement advocates transcending traditional dichotomies, such as subject/object, and diminishing the distance between the appreciator and the appreciated, aiming at a total, multi-sensory continuity of the former with the latter, be it nature or art. Moreover, the aesthetics of engagement is not limited to nature and art, but constitutes a model for the appreciation of any environment. Thus, it contributes not only to the aesthetics of nature but to the field of environmental aesthetics in general.³⁰

In addition to the cognitive approach and the aesthetics of engagement, there are a number of other distinct positions in recent and contemporary philosophical research on the aesthetics of nature. The aesthetics of engagement stresses our immediate involvement with nature. Some other positions also emphasize immediacy in our experience of natural environments. In a 1993 article, Noël Carroll defends one version of this kind of position. By considering the three main arguments for Carlson's cognitive approach, which he labels science by elimination, the claims of objectivist epistemology, and the order argument, Carroll argues that although science-based appreciation of nature is appropriate, it must be supplemented with our emotional reactions to nature, since being moved by nature without dependence on scientific knowledge is also a common aesthetic response to the natural world. He contends that nature often immediately and directly elicits such emotional arousal from us and that this less intellectual, more visceral experience of nature is a legitimate and important way of aesthetically appreciating it.³¹ However, unlike Berleant's aesthetics of engagement, Carroll's position does not call for immersion in nature but only for an emotional relationship with it based on our everyday knowledge and experience of it.

Two other positions that, like Carroll's, grant a significant role to our emotion-

al relationship with nature are developed and defended by Sagoff and by Cheryl Foster. In his 1974 essay, Sagoff calls attention to nature's expressive and symbolic aesthetic properties. However, in a later discussion, he elaborates our appreciation of nature in terms of emotional responses, such as reverence, affection, and love. He argues that our duty to protect nature stems from the attachment we feel for it, which, given our intrinsic social nature, is not unlike the sympathy and protectiveness we feel for some of our fellow humans, as well as for some of their artifacts. As he puts it: "Raising children, preserving Nature, cherishing art, and practicing the virtues of civil life ... these actions justify themselves; these virtues are their own reward."³² Sagoff's conception of love and reverence for nature brings to mind ideas of awe and worship, which gesture in the direction of the ineffable. Foster likewise relates the appreciation of nature to a range of feelings that are ineffable, because of their "resistance to discursive formulation." She terms this the "ambient" dimension of aesthetic experience, characterizing it as involving "a feeling of being surrounded by or infused with an enveloping, engaging tactility." Echoing Berleant's aesthetics of engagement, she holds that such experiences of nature "melt into a synthesized backdrop for ambient contemplation of both the backdrop itself and the sensuous way we relate to it," which "as aesthetic, constitute a form of knowing both oneself and the world anew."³³

The ineffable quality of our aesthetic experience of nature is also recognized by Stan Godlovitch who, in his 1994 "Icebreakers" article, attempts to establish what he calls an acentric approach to nature, which will not limit appreciation to human capacities and thus can serve the needs of an acentric environmental ethic. He considers three approaches to the aesthetic appreciation of nature that he thinks move in the right direction: the well-known Gaia thesis, the cognitive approach as presented by Carlson, and the emotional approach as expressed in Sagoff's ideas about love and affection. Godlovitch finds difficulties with each of these, arguing that, in requiring either knowledge about, or emotional affection for, that which we appreciate, neither the cognitive nor the emotional approach allow for the extent to which nature is alien, aloof, distant, and unknowable. He contends that the only appropriate aesthetic experience of nature is a sense of mystery involving a state of appreciative incomprehension, a sense of not belonging to, and of being separate from, nature.³⁴ Views such as Godlovitch's, like Sagoff's, bring to mind the feelings of awe and wonder that sometimes mark our appreciation of the natural world and thus recall aspects of the historical roots of the aesthetics of nature, such as the notion of the sublime.

Godlovitch's mystery position finds neither knowledge nor emotion fully satisfactory as a basis for the aesthetic appreciation of nature. However, there is another kind of approach to such appreciation that focuses neither on knowledge nor on emotion, but rather on imagination. This line of thought is developed both by Hepburn and by Emily Brady. Following up some of the ideas suggested in his earlier "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty," Hepburn affirms that our aesthetic appreciation of nature may involve many different levels, but he

stresses the role of what he calls the metaphysical imagination. The metaphysical imagination finds deep and sometimes transcendent meaning in our experiences of nature, in which our appreciation of the particular is infused with the significance of the whole. Thus our imagination can interpret the natural world as revealing universal metaphysical truths: insights about the meaning of life, the human condition, and humanity's place in the cosmos.³⁵ The role of imagination is further elaborated by Brady, who argues that there are serious weaknesses in cognitive science-based approaches that can be remedied by stressing the roles of perception and imagination in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. Her account has similarities to Hepburn's, although rather than focusing on the metaphysical imagination, she distinguishes four specific modes of imaginative activity, which she calls exploratory, projective, ampliative, and revelatory, demonstrating how each can play a role in our experiences of nature.³⁶ Brady's position, as do some others noted above, harks back to the historical roots of the aesthetics of nature, especially as found in Kant.

In contrast to positions on the aesthetics of nature that stress less cognitive dimensions, such as engagement, emotion, mystery, or imagination, a number of individuals, in addition to Carlson, have further developed and defended the cognitive view that scientific knowledge is especially significant in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. In a group of articles published in the middle 1990s, Yuriko Saito, Marcia Eaton, and Holmes Rolston all reaffirm the basic cognitive position. Like Carlson, Saito argues against certain kinds of artistic and cultural approaches to the aesthetic appreciation of nature and in favor of approaches that appreciate nature, as she puts it, "on its own terms." She holds that the basic reason for doing so is a moral obligation to treat things for what they are. Although she agrees that science-based cognitive approaches accomplish this to some extent, she worries that they have certain drawbacks. She argues that these problems can be addressed by indicating more clearly the particular kinds of scientific knowledge that are relevant and by augmenting scientific accounts with other accounts, such as those found in mythology and folklore, that also attempt "to tell nature's own story."³⁷ In a similar fashion, Eaton argues against imagination-based approaches, such as Brady's, that, unlike science-based positions, allow for fictional imaginings, which she fears can facilitate moral and environmental harm. She holds that, in contrast to such approaches, aesthetic appreciation of nature that has a solid, fact-based foundation will provide support for proper environmental care.³⁸ Likewise, Rolston, one of the key founders of the field of environmental ethics, gives a strongly affirmative answer to the question "Does aesthetic appreciation of landscapes need to be science-based?"³⁹

In the recent and contemporary research on the aesthetics of nature noted thus far, different approaches emphasize different resources, such as knowledge, engagement, emotion, or imagination, in order to elaborate our aesthetic appreciation of nature. There are also approaches that attempt to bring these different resources together in order to achieve more holistic accounts of such appreciation.

Three examples of such comprehensive approaches are found in the work of Rolston, Foster, and Ronald Moore. Although Rolston defends the significance of scientific knowledge in the appreciation of natural environments, he also finds an important place in such appreciation for other dimensions of our experience. In his 1998 essay, "The Aesthetic Experience of Forests," he uses the example of the forest to explore the ways in which our aesthetic appreciation of nature differs from that of art. He endorses not only the role of science in such appreciation, but also that of engaged participation, of the sublime, and of religious experience.⁴⁰ Thus the position he presents in this essay brings together different themes that are developed in the approaches of other contributors to the field.

Similarly, although Foster stresses the importance of what she calls the "ambient" dimension of our experiences of nature, she also attempts to find a way of balancing this dimension with other aspects of appreciation. She diagnoses what she sees as a "cleft" in contemporary aesthetics of nature between cognitive approaches, which she labels "narrative" and links with Carlson, Eaton, Rolston, and Saito, and the ambient dimension, which she associates with Berleant and Hepburn, as well as a number of other individuals, such as Pauline von Bonsdorff, Jane Howarth, and Barbara Sandrisser.⁴¹ As noted above, the ambient dimension involves knowledge by acquaintance and sensuous contact with nature. Foster defends this approach against what she considers an overemphasis on the cognitive in the current literature, but nonetheless argues for the "necessity of both approaches," contending that neither "in isolation can fully articulate the experience of nature as it gives rise to what we might know of aesthetic value."⁴²

Marking a division similar to that noted by Foster, Moore also distinguishes between two different orientations in the contemporary aesthetics of nature. He labels one group of individuals "conceptualists," by whom he means cognitivists such as Carlson and Eaton, who, as he puts it, insist that there are categories and concepts that can be deployed to give aesthetic judgments about nature the legitimacy of aesthetic judgments in the artworld. Another group he calls "non-conceptualists" and identifies with Berleant, Brady, and Carroll, who, to paraphrase him, insist that basic to our view of nature is a liberation from conceptual frameworks, so that emotion and imagination can gain a proper place in our appreciation. Moore argues for a view he calls "Syncretic Aesthetics," which aims to mediate between these two extremes. He attempts, on the one hand, to reaffirm various connections between the appreciation of nature and our experiences of art and, on the other, to free aesthetic appreciation of nature from both science and "unfettered imagination."⁴³ Each of these two themes can be found in other contemporary research on the aesthetics of nature.

Moore's emphasis on the freedom that he thinks is possible and desirable in our aesthetic appreciation of nature recalls Hepburn's observation in his 1966 essay that, since the natural world is not constrained by the strictures of the artworld, it allows for an open, engaging, and creative mode of appreciation. The idea that such freedom is the hallmark of the aesthetic appreciation of nature is further

developed in recent essays by Malcolm Budd and John Andrew Fisher. Budd goes part way with the cognitivist line of thought, insisting on the position, which he attributes to Carlson and Rolston, that “just as the aesthetic appreciation of art is the appreciation of art *as art*, so the aesthetic appreciation of nature is the aesthetic appreciation of nature *as nature*.” This is because, he adds, such appreciation, “if it is to be true to what nature actually is, must be the aesthetic appreciation of nature *not* as an intentionally produced object (and so not as art).” However, Budd does not take the additional step of concluding that, just as art is to be appreciated in light of art historical and art critical knowledge, nature must be appreciated in light of scientific knowledge. Rather he holds that the aesthetic appreciation of nature is “endowed with a freedom denied to artistic appreciation,” claiming that “in a section of the natural world we are free to frame elements as we please, to adopt any position or move in any way, at any time of the day or night, in any atmospheric conditions, and to use any sense modality,” and, moreover, to do so “without thereby incurring the charge of misunderstanding.”⁴⁴

Fisher defends a position not dissimilar from Budd’s, although he develops his particular version of the freedom approach for only one aspect of the aesthetic appreciation of nature. He directs his attention to the sounds of nature, which he believes have been largely overlooked in research on the aesthetics of nature, but yet constitute a source of great aesthetic enjoyment. He argues that the objectivity sought by some writers, such as Carlson and environmental philosopher Janna Thompson,⁴⁵ cannot be achieved with the sounds of nature, since neither of what he calls the guidance-by-object requirement or the agreement requirement are easily met by nature’s sounds. He contends that the complexity of the sounds of nature and the diversity of human “ways of hearing” combine to allow multiple appropriate ways to aesthetically appreciate such sounds. Thus Fisher embraces an almost completely unrestrained freedom in our appreciation of these sounds, since this, as he puts it, “simply yields an even greater abundance to listen to.”⁴⁶

Given the freedom that Budd and Fisher posit concerning our aesthetic appreciation of nature, it is not surprising to find others who argue that a wide range of information and knowledge may be taken as relevant to such appreciation. In one sense, such views are in basic agreement with cognitive approaches in that they accept the idea that knowledge is central to aesthetic appreciation. However, they diverge from some cognitive accounts in not privileging scientific knowledge. Rather they gather resources for aesthetic appreciation of nature from a variety of sources. As already noted, Saito, a defender of science-based cognitivism, who argues against certain kinds of artistic and cultural approaches to the appreciation of nature, yet thinks that science-based appreciation is helpfully augmented by mythological and folkloric accounts that also attempt “to tell nature’s own story.” Although going beyond scientific knowledge, she limits the information relevant to appreciation of nature to that which takes nature “on its own terms.” She thereby strongly affirms the idea stressed by Budd, Carlson, Eaton, and Rolston that nature must be appreciated for what it is, that is, as nature.

However, a number of other recent discussions of the aesthetics of nature, although somewhat cognitive in orientation, are yet less concerned that the information deemed relevant to appreciation be restricted to that which takes nature “on its own terms” or facilitates appreciation of nature “as nature.” For example, in attempting to develop his holist, “syncretic” account, Moore reaffirms the importance in nature appreciation of our experiences and knowledge of art, the significance of which is downgraded by cognitivists such as Carlson and Rolston, as well as by other environmental philosophers such as J. Baird Callicott.⁴⁷ The reaffirmation of the role of artistic appreciative models, especially as found in the traditions of landscape painting and picturesque appreciation, is developed more fully in recent essays by Robert Stecker, Ira Newman, and Donald Crawford. Stecker’s and Newman’s approaches are quite eclectic. For example, like Budd, Stecker accepts that nature must be appreciated “as nature and not as something else” and, similar to Carroll, he sees the cognitive science-based approach to nature appreciation as “a welcome addition, a third way of appreciating nature.” However, he refers to it as a “third way” because he argues that artistic approaches emphasizing formalistic appreciation of particular natural objects and picturesque appreciation of scenery, which Carlson criticizes as the object and the scenery models of nature appreciation, are “perfectly proper appreciations of their objects” with “nothing illegitimate or incorrect about them.”⁴⁸ Along somewhat similar lines, Newman accepts what he calls “a natural aesthetic that recognizes the autonomy of nature,” and yet he endorses the appropriateness of certain kinds of formalistic, picturesque-influenced modes of nature appreciation, developing two views that he labels “refined formalism” and “iconographic formalism.”⁴⁹

Crawford investigates the relationships between the aesthetic appreciation of art and that of nature in a number of essays. In “Scenery and the Aesthetics of Nature,” he reaffirms the significance of the legacy of the picturesque, defending the aesthetic appreciation of scenery as a proper form of aesthetic appreciation of nature. He considers three arguments against the appreciation of scenery. The first, which he attributes to George Santayana and Rolston, suggests that scenery appreciation is not a proper part of the aesthetic appreciation of nature because nature is objective, while scenery and especially landscapes and scenic prospects are necessarily based on uniquely subjective, human points of view. The second, which he finds in Callicott, Carlson, Eaton, and Saito, denies that scenery appreciation is part of the aesthetic appreciation of nature because experiencing scenery depends on various artistic models, being concerned with formal and compositional properties, whereas the aesthetic appreciation of nature must be informed by natural history and ecology. The third argument, which he credits to Berleant, denies scenery appreciation a place in the appreciation of nature on the grounds that the latter must involve active engagement with nature, while the experience of scenery is said to be passive and contemplative. Crawford rejects all three arguments, concluding: “So until someone comes up with a better argu-

ment, I'll continue to enjoy natural scenery and think that I'm both experiencing nature and doing so aesthetically."⁵⁰

Unlike Stecker, Newman, and Crawford, who focus on the role of artistic traditions such as landscape painting and the picturesque in the aesthetic appreciation of nature, other individuals find a much broader range of cultural information to be relevant. In a recent essay, Thomas Heyd argues that there are problems with the "claim that natural science (and its predecessors and analogues) does or should provide the primary account or story informing our aesthetic appreciation of nature." He proposes that "there are good reasons for believing that aesthetic appreciation does and should benefit from a great many, diverse stories, as gathered by people from a great variety of walks of life and cultures." He considers cases of both artistic and non-artistic stories, as well as ones that are communicated by either verbal or non-verbal means. Heyd thus comes close to endorsing what might be called a postmodern approach to the appreciation of nature, the view that *anything* that an appreciator happens to bring to nature and happens to find enriching is aesthetically relevant; as he puts it, "if [stories] enrich our capacities to aesthetically appreciate the natural environment (pure *or* modified) then they are relevant."⁵¹

Approaches to the aesthetic appreciation of nature that emphasize the general role of cultural stories and other cultural information in our appreciation of nature stand in a venerable tradition.⁵² However, the aesthetic significance of such information seems most relevant for less natural and more human influenced environments—environments that constitute important places in the histories and cultures of particular peoples. This "sense of place" is investigated by a number of thinkers such as Yi-Fu Tuan, who, in a life's work of important books and essays, elaborates it in terms of different peoples' cultural and artistic heritages.⁵³ In this sense, landscape descriptions in literature and poetry of various human-influenced environments that are "the places" of certain peoples are relevant to the aesthetic appreciation of such environments. Even scientifically oriented cognitivists can accept this kind of claim—when it is made concerning the relevance of landscape descriptions in, for example, the novels of Thomas Hardy to the rural countrysides of southwest England or those of Tony Hillerman to the desert landscapes of southwest America.⁵⁴ In addition to cultural stories contained in art forms such as literature and poetry, those that are expressed in other forms, such as film, environmental art, and, of course, painting, are continually being explored, re-explored, and reaffirmed for their role in shaping the aesthetic appreciation of human influenced environments, as well as natural ones.⁵⁵ Concerning the latter in particular, such investigations must be sensitive to the dangers involved in failing to appreciate nature for what it is and thereby imposing overly restrictive or inappropriate appreciative models on the natural world.

Within present-day culture, one particular kind of art, simply called nature art, is often successful in facilitating the aesthetic appreciation of nature for what it is.

It is exemplified in various art forms such as poetry, film, video, and painting. However, it is most frequently associated with literature and with classic nature writers, such as Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, John Burroughs, and Aldo Leopold, as well as with contemporary ones, such as Sally Carrighar, Sigurd Olson, Barry Lopez, Annie Dillard, Ann Zwinger, David Quammen.⁵⁶ This body of work, especially the more recent nature literature, receives less attention by philosophers concerned with the aesthetics of nature than it deserves. Some recent instances are considered in this collection, for example, in the exchange between Eaton and Brady and in Foster's elaboration of the narrative tradition in nature appreciation. Yrjö Sepänmaa examines nature art more extensively. In his 1986 *Beauty of Environment*, a major investigation of the aesthetics of environments, he documents the influence of Finnish "nature poetry" on the aesthetic appreciation of Finnish landscapes.⁵⁷ In more recent essays, such as his "Environmental Stories: Speaking and Writing Nature," Sepänmaa investigates the complex and fascinating interrelationships between humanity's stories about nature and nature's own story. He asks: "How and what does nature tell us and write to us; how and what kind of texts do we produce about what we hear and read?" Answers to these questions are "illustrated by the nature writers, whose work is ... a reading of the Book of Nature, and then writing a book that repeats that reading."⁵⁸

In spite of their impact, however, the stories and information contained in art and literature, even in nature art, may not be the most significant cultural forces shaping our aesthetic appreciation of environments, natural or otherwise. Perhaps the stories and information found in mythology, religion, and metaphysics are more influential. Heyd, Saito, Sepänmaa, Tuan, and others give an important role to folklore and mythological stories in particular peoples' aesthetic appreciation of environments. Similarly, the aesthetic significance of religion, as Rolston and Hepburn observe, should not be overlooked.⁵⁹ Granting the aesthetic relevance of all such information, as well as that embodied in art and literature, may lead toward a pluralistic or relativistic account of the aesthetic appreciation of nature, if not to a postmodern one. However, the possibility of a more objective or at least a more comprehensive approach may lie in another aspect of our culture heritage, the metaphysical, which, like scientific knowledge, is more universal. Hepburn, as noted, argues for the aesthetic relevance of what he calls the metaphysical imagination. On this view, our imagination interprets the natural world as revealing metaphysical insights, those abstract meditations and speculations about reality that are often engendered by our encounters with nature. But, we must ask, which of such meditations and speculations are only trivial and fanciful and which are serious and sustainable? In essence, the issue is again about which stories reveal nature as it in fact is and thereby promote appreciation of it "on its own terms." Consequently, as Hepburn's early essay suggests, when considering different accounts of the aesthetic appreciation of nature, we are ultimately driven toward fundamental metaphysical questions about the true character of nature and our proper place in its grand design.

V. Directions for Future Research

In conclusion, it is useful to complement our review of recent and contemporary research in the aesthetics of nature by revisiting some of the themes that have been mentioned in passing throughout the introduction. They are related to the continuing debate about the relative importance of factors such as scientific knowledge, engagement, emotional arousal, imagination, and mythological stories. Yet these themes are in their own right significant areas of ongoing work in the aesthetics of nature. Like Hepburn's call to pursue metaphysical questions about the true character of nature and our proper place in it, they constitute an important part of the agenda for future research in the field.

We observed above that, in addition to literature and poetry, other art forms, such as film, environmental art, and, of course, painting, are continually being explored and their significance in shaping our aesthetic appreciation of both natural and human influenced environments affirmed. In spite of the reservations of more scientifically oriented cognitivists, it has been evident ever since Oscar Wilde made his famous observation that nature imitates art that using art forms as models for nature appreciation can illuminate our aesthetic experience of nature as well as color it.⁶⁰ Various arts have long served as vehicles to guide our appreciation or as metaphors to grasp and influence our response. We have seen how landscape painting presents the ideal of the picturesque in landscape appreciation. Similarly, we noted how nature stories can become narratives for ordering our experiences of nature. Likewise, drama can offer frames for grasping powerful or striking natural occurrences that might otherwise, like the sublime, exceed our capacity to order, contain, and appreciate them. Even music, as in the compositions of Debussy, can both reflect and influence our perception of water, moonlight, and clouds. This kind of access to environments through the arts can heavily influence how we experience and thus how we value them, whether we find them rewarding, frightening, or forbidding. In this sense, artists are explorers of nature, just as they are explorers of the human psyche, of human relationships, and of the entire social milieu. The continued investigation of the place and importance of such artistic explorations of nature is a key direction for future research in the field.

Furthermore, there are critical questions concerning how our appreciation of natural environments resembles or differs from our appreciation of works of art, as well as from that of other kinds of environments. Such questions raise issues about the relationships between the aesthetics of nature and environmental aesthetics in general, and indeed about philosophical aesthetics itself. And here the former may indicate important future research directions for the latter. For example, we observed above that some approaches to the aesthetics of nature emphasize emotional engagement with natural environments, while others stress that nature should be appreciated "on its own terms." Ideas such as these have relevance for both environmental aesthetics and philosophical aesthetics in general, for they are equally applicable to the aesthetic appreciation of the world beyond the natural

world. To appreciate human influenced environments, such as the patterned English countryside or the open American agricultural landscape, we must fully engage such environments “on their own terms”—with understanding, insight, and feelings about what they are like and why they are as they are.⁶¹ The same is true of environments that are much more human influenced or wholly human created, whether large scale, such as suburban “blandscapes” and urban cityscapes, or small, such as our yards, our homes, our offices, and our living spaces.⁶² Such ideas also clearly apply to “environmental” arts such as gardens, landscape architecture, and architecture.⁶³ And their relevance to traditional art forms can be seen in the parallelism that they illuminate between how philosophy of art relates to art criticism and how the aesthetics of nature connects with what may be called environmental or landscape criticism.⁶⁴

We also observed that views about the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of natural environments have ramifications for environmental ethics. Grounding appreciation on scientific knowledge, for example, may help to provide a more objective footing for the work of landscape assessors and planners. However, the relationship between the aesthetics of nature and ethical issues concerning the environment is much broader than this and constitutes a central area for future research. There are pressing questions about how aesthetic and ethical environmental concerns affect one another: how ethical judgments influence aesthetic appreciation as well as how aesthetic appreciation influences ethical judgments. The bearing of ethically challengeable practices on aesthetic experience is nowhere more insistent than in the environmental arena, from concerns over deforestation, the proliferation of exotic species, and the draining of wetlands, to the extinction of greater or lesser forms of life—the list is endless. There is, of course, a long tradition in North American environmentalism of finding support for environmental ethics in our aesthetic appreciation of nature, but this tradition needs continued justification and development.⁶⁵ For example, we must ask about the significance of practices such as emotional engagement with nature and appreciating it “on its own terms.” What exactly do they involve and are they ethically as well as aesthetically mandated? More generally, we must ask about our proper and morally justifiable relationship to the natural world, for that relationship, whether it be as master, explorer, humble observer, or fully engaged participant, both reflects our understanding and our appreciation of nature and vastly influences it.

Finally, future research in the aesthetics of nature requires more than philosophical analysis and theoretical elaboration. We must address questions such as: How can we characterize the actual appreciative experiences that we have? What are their features and what are the limits of the degree to which we can analyze them? How are our appreciative experiences in fact affected by our upbringing, our profession, our culture, our beliefs? What features of natural environments do we actually value? What sorts of paths, views, and approaches are experienced as attractive and satisfying? What kinds of bodily involvement and movement are found most rewarding? What kinds of sensory and other perceptual qualities and

what kinds of spaces, volumes, and textures appear to possess aesthetic appeal? Many of these questions are intertwined and perhaps cannot be treated as separate issues. As a field of investigation that arises out of human experience and that involves such interrelated questions, the aesthetics of nature must include a solid empirical grounding. We have observed that some of the philosophical research in the aesthetics of nature focuses on empirical and applied issues, frequently stressing various criticisms of different empirical approaches. However, for substantive future work in the field more is needed than simple critique. Collaborative research is essential, involving not only philosophical aesthetics but also environmental psychology, environmental design, cultural anthropology, cultural geography, and landscape ecology.⁶⁶

Future research in the aesthetics of natural environments must move in many different directions and must involve many different disciplines and perspectives. We hope that this volume will help stimulate inquiry that is both wide and deep.

Notes

- 1 For brief overviews of the field of environmental aesthetics, see, for example: Allen Carlson, "Environmental Aesthetics," *A Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. D. Cooper (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992), pp. 142-144; Arnold Berleant, "Environmental Aesthetics," *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. M. Kelly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), Volume 2, pp. 114-120; Arnold Berleant and Allen Carlson, "Introduction," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56/2 (1998): 97-100 [This is the theme issue of *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* on Environmental Aesthetics, edited by A. Berleant and A. Carlson, from which Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11, and 13 of this volume are reprinted]; Allen Carlson, "Environmental Aesthetics," *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, eds. B. Gaut and D. Lopes (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 423-436; John A. Fisher, "Environmental Aesthetics," in *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. J. Levinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Allen Carlson, "Environmental Aesthetics" *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy Online*, ed. E. Craig (London: Routledge, 2002): <www.rep.routledge.com/views/home/html>.
- 2 There are a number of general accounts of the aesthetics of nature, such as, for example: Allen Carlson, "Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. E. Craig (London: Routledge, 1998), Volume 6, pp. 731-735; Allen Carlson, "Contemporary Aesthetics of Nature," *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*, Volume 3, pp. 346-349; Emily Brady, "Aesthetics of the Natural Environment," in Vernon Pratt with Jane Howarth and Emily Brady, *Environment and Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2000); Donald W. Crawford, "The Aesthetics of Nature and the Environment," in *Blackwell Guide To Aesthetics*, ed. P. Kivy (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003); Malcolm Budd, "Aesthetics of Nature," in *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*.
- 3 For a concise discussion of Kant on the aesthetics of nature, see Malcolm Budd, "Delight in the Natural World: Kant on the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature: Part I:

- Natural Beauty, Part II: Natural Beauty and Morality, Part III: The Sublime in Nature," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 38 (1998): 1-18, 117-126, 233-250.
- 4 The standard short account of the rise of disinterestedness is Jerome Stolnitz, "On the Origins of 'Aesthetic Disinterestedness,'" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 20 (1961): 131-143. Although standard, the account is not without its critics; see, for example, George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), Chapter 2.
 - 5 Two standard treatments are Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London: G.P. Putnam's, 1927), and W.J. Hipple, Jr., *The Beautiful, the Sublime and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957). For a more recent account, see M. Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989); and for shorter discussions, Dabney Townsend, "The Picturesque," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55 (1997): 365-376, and Stephanie Ross, "Picturesque," *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*, Volume 3, pp. 511-515. Concerning its influence on the perception of the North American landscape, see John Conron, *American Picturesque* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).
 - 6 See the seminal article by P.O. Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics I, II," *The Journal of the History of Ideas* 12, 13 (1951-2): 496-527, 17-46.
 - 7 E. Bullough, "'Psychical Distance' as a Factor in Art and as an Aesthetic Principle," *The British Journal of Psychology* 5 (1912): 87-98 and C. Bell, *Art* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1913).
 - 8 A key step on the path to the rejection of these ideas was John Dewey's *Art as Experience* [1934] (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1958). The classic statement of the initial version of the institutional theory is Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis*.
 - 9 See, for example, Arnold Berleant, "Aesthetics and the Contemporary Arts," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 29 (1970): 155-168, many themes of which find fuller expression in *The Aesthetic Field* (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1970), as well as in "The Historicity of Aesthetics I and II," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 26 (1986), 101-111, 195-203, and in *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1990). Citations to Berleant's publications in the aesthetics of nature are included in other notes, especially note 30.
 - 10 M.C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1958); J. Margolis, ed., *Philosophy Looks at the Arts: Contemporary Readings in Aesthetics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962); W.E. Kennick, ed., *Art and Philosophy: Readings in Aesthetics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964).
 - 11 Don Mannison, "A Prolegomenon to a Human Chauvinistic Aesthetic," in *Environmental Philosophy*, eds. D. Mannison, M. McRobbie, and R. Routley (Canberra: Australian National University, 1980) and Robert Elliot, "Faking Nature," *Inquiry* 25 (1982): 81-93. Elliot later rejects this position in favor of one closer to what is called

positive aesthetics, see Robert Elliot, *Faking Nature: The Ethics of Environmental Restoration* (London: Routledge, 1997).

- 12 A forceful statement of this view is Paul Ziff, "Anything Viewed," in *Essays in Honour of Jaakko Hintikka On the Occasion of His Fiftieth Birthday on January 12, 1979*, eds. E. Saarinen, R. Hilpinen, I. Niiniluoto, and M. Provence Hintikka (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979).
- 13 This development is both fostered by and documented in works such as C. Tunnard and B. Pushkarev, *Man-made America: Chaos or Control?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); P. Blake, *God's Own Junkyard: The Planned Deterioration of America's Landscape* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964); P.F. Lewis, D. Lowenthal, and Yi-Fu Tuan, *Visual Blight in America* (Washington, DC: Association of American Geographers, 1973).
- 14 Some paradigm examples from the time include B.R. Litton, *Forest Landscape Description and Inventories—A Basis for Land Planning and Design* (Berkeley: USDA Pacific Southwest Forest and Range Experimental Station, 1968); E.L. Shafer and J. Mietz, *It Seems Possible to Quantify Scenic Beauty in Photographs* (Upper Darby, PA: USDA Northeastern Forest Experiment Station, 1970); [no author given], *USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] Forest Service National Forest Landscape Management*, Volume 1 and 2 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1972, 1974). For insight into how this type of research has changed over the last thirty years, see, for example, Jim Bedwell, Larry Blocker, Paul Gobster, Terry Slider, and Tom Atzet, "Beyond the Picturesque: Integrating Aesthetics and Ecology in Forest Service Scenery Management," in *ASLA 1997: Annual Meeting Proceedings*, ed. C. Wagner (Washington, DC: American Society of Landscape Architects, 1997); or the collection edited by S. Sheppard and H. Harshaw, *Forests and Landscapes: Linking Ecology, Sustainability and Aesthetics* (New York: CAB International, 2001); or Simon Bell's excellent *Landscape: Pattern, Perception and Process* (London: Routledge, 1999).
- 15 In "A Taste for Country" [1948], Aldo Leopold complains: "There are those who are willing to be herded in droves through 'scenic' places; who find mountains grand if they be proper mountains with waterfalls, cliffs, and lakes. To such the Kansas plains are tedious." See Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac, with Essays on Conservation from Round River* (New York: Ballantine, 1966), pp. 179-180. In "The Taste for Mountain Scenery," *History Today* 25 (1975): 305-312, geographer Ronald Rees explicitly targets the legacy of the picturesque, claiming that "it simply confirmed our anthropocentrism by suggesting that nature exists to please as well as to serve us. Our ethics, if the word can be used to describe our attitudes and behaviour toward the environment, have lagged behind our aesthetics. It is an unfortunate lapse which allows us to abuse our local environments and venerate the Alps and the Rockies." Andrews gives more scope to this kind of worry, holding that there is a general moral fault with the picturesque: "the trouble is that the Picturesque enterprise in its later stage, with its almost exclusive emphasis on visual appreciation, entailed a suppression of the spectator's moral response." See *Search for the Picturesque*, p. 59 [see note 5].

- 16 See, for example, the work of human ecologist Paul Shepard, such as *Man in the Landscape: A Historic View of the Esthetics of Nature* (New York: Knopf, 1967) and *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973). On this point, also see R.A. Smith and C.M. Smith, "Aesthetics and Environmental Education," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 4 (1970): 131-132.
- 17 Ronald Hepburn, "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty," in *British Analytical Philosophy*, eds. B. Williams and A. Montefiore (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966) [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 1]. For a shorter version of this essay, see Hepburn's "Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," in *Aesthetics and the Modern World*, ed. H. Osborne (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968). For references to Hepburn's other publications on the aesthetics of nature, see note 35.
- 18 Allen Carlson, "Environmental Aesthetics and the Dilemma of Aesthetic Education," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 10 (1976): 69-82; "On the Possibility of Quantifying Scenic Beauty," *Landscape Planning* 4 (1977): 131-172; "Formal Qualities and the Natural Environment," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 13 (1979): 99-114. For a follow-up discussion concerning "Quantifying Scenic Beauty," see "On the Possibility of Quantifying Scenic Beauty—A Response to Ribe," *Landscape Planning* 11 (1984): 49-65. Citations to Carlson's other publications in the aesthetics of nature are included in other notes, especially note 26.
- 19 J. Appleton, "Landscape Evaluation: The Theoretical Vacuum," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 66 (1975): 120-123. For references to other publications by Appleton in this area, see note 20.
- 20 J. Appleton, *The Experience of Landscape* (London: John Wiley and Sons, 1975). For a shorter account of the theory and some related considerations, see J. Appleton, "Pleasure and the Perception of Habitat: A Conceptual Framework," in *Environmental Aesthetics: Essays in Interpretation*, eds. B. Sadler and A. Carlson (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 1982). Appleton attempts to extend his theory to human-influenced and human-created environments as well as to the arts in *The Symbolism of Habitat: An Interpretation of Landscape in the Arts* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990). See also Appleton's "Nature as Honorary Art," *Environmental Values* 7 (1998): 255-266, as well as "Landscape Evaluation: The Theoretical Vacuum," cited in note 19. Another attempt at this kind of theory can be found in Gordon H. Orians and Judith H. Heerwagen, "An Ecological and Evolutionary Approach to Landscape Aesthetics," in *Landscape Meanings and Values*, eds. E.C. Penning-Roswell and D. Lowenthal (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986); see also Orians and Heerwagen, "Evolved Responses to Landscapes," in *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture*, eds. J. Barkow, L. Cosmides, and J. Tooby (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), and Heerwagen and Orians, "Humans, Habitats, and Aesthetics," in *The Biophilia Hypothesis*, eds. S.R. Kellert and E.O. Wilson (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1993).
- 21 See, for example, J.L. Sell, J.G. Taylor, and E.H. Zube, "Toward a Theoretical Framework for Landscape Perception," in *Environmental Perception and Behavior: An*

- Inventory and Prospect*, eds. T. Saarinen, D. Seamon, and J. L. Sell (Chicago: Department of Geography, University of Chicago, 1984); R. Kaplan and S. Kaplan, *The Experience of Nature: A Psychological Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); or Steven Bourassa, *The Aesthetics of Landscape* (London: Belhaven, 1991).
- 22 For example: E.H. Zube, J.L. Sell, and J.G. Taylor, "Landscape Perception: Research, Application and Theory," *Landscape Planning* 9 (1982): 1-33; E.H. Zube, "Themes in Landscape Assessment Theory," *Landscape Journal* 3 (1984): 104-10; W.L. Cats-Baril and L. Gibson, "Evaluating Aesthetics: The Major Issues and a Bibliography," *Landscape Journal* 5 (1986): 93-102; Allen Carlson, "Recent Landscape Assessment Research," *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*, Volume 3, pp. 102-105; Terry C. Daniel, "Whither Scenic Beauty? Visual Landscape Quality Assessment in the 21st Century," *Landscape and Urban Planning* 54 (2001): 276-281. In addition, Bourassa, *Aesthetics of Landscape*, has a number of overview chapters as well as an extensive bibliography.
 - 23 For example: G.H. Elsner and R.C. Smardon, eds., *The Proceedings of Our National Landscape: A Conference on Applied Techniques for Analysis and Management of the Visual Resource* (Berkeley: USDA Pacific Southwest Forest and Range Experimental Station, 1979); T.F. Saarinen, D. Seamon, and J.L. Sell, eds., *Environmental Perception and Behavior: An Inventory and Prospect* (Chicago: Department of Geography, University of Chicago, 1984); J.L. Nasar, ed., *Environmental Aesthetics: Theory, Research, and Applications* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Although now somewhat dated, the latter is a very useful collection of thirty-two articles of differing lengths and technical detail, mainly by individuals representing various empirical and applied approaches, together with an excellent bibliography of empirical work.
 - 24 Some of the philosophers represented in this collection address this issue. See, for example: Arnold Berleant, "Aesthetic Perception in Environmental Design," in *Environmental Aesthetics: Theory, Research, and Applications*; Marcia Muelder Eaton, *Aesthetics and the Good Life* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1989), Chapters 4 and 5; Allen Carlson, "Whose Vision? Whose Meanings? Whose Values? Pluralism and Objectivity in Landscape Analysis," in *Vision, Culture, and Landscape*, ed. P. Groth (Berkeley: University of California, 1990); Allen Carlson, "On the Theoretical Vacuum in Landscape Assessment," *Landscape Journal* 12 (1993): 51-56; Marcia Muelder Eaton, "The Role of Aesthetics in Designing Sustainable Landscapes," in *Real World Design: The Foundations and Practice of Environmental Aesthetics*, ed. Y. Sepänmaa (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1997); Allen Carlson, "Aesthetic Preferences for Sustainable Landscapes: Seeing and Knowing," in *Forests and Landscapes: Linking Ecology, Sustainability and Aesthetics*. Also of interest in this regard is Douglas J. Porteous, *Environmental Aesthetics: Ideas, Politics and Planning* (London: Routledge, 1996).
 - 25 Mark Sagoff, "On Preserving the Natural Environment," *Yale Law Journal* 84 (1974): 205-267. For other references to Sagoff's research on the aesthetics of nature, see note 32.

- 26 Allen Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1979): 267-276 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 2]; See also Carlson's "Nature, Aesthetic Judgement, and Objectivity," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 40 (1981): 15-27; "Nature and Positive Aesthetics," *Environmental Ethics* 6 (1984): 5-34; "Saito on the Correct Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 20 (1986): 85-93; "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, eds. S. Kemal and I. Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); "Nature, Aesthetic Appreciation, and Knowledge," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53 (1995): 393-400; "Aesthetic Appreciation of the Natural Environment," in *Aesthetics*, eds. S. Feagin and P. Maynard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); "Nature Appreciation and the Question of Aesthetic Relevance," in *Environment and the Arts: Perspectives on Environmental Aesthetics*, ed. A. Berleant (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); as well as his *Aesthetics and the Environment: The Appreciation of Nature, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2000). In addition, see Carlson's overview essays, referenced in notes 1 and 2, as well as publications cited in other notes, especially note 18.
- 27 On Leopold's views about aesthetics of nature, see J. Baird Callicott, "The Land Aesthetic," in *Companion to a Sand County Almanac: Interpretive and Critical Essays*, ed. J.B. Callicott (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987) and Paul Gobster, "Aldo Leopold's Ecological Esthetic: Integrating Esthetic and Biodiversity Values," *Journal of Forestry* 93 (1995): 6-10 (93/2 is a theme issue of the *Journal of Forestry* on forest aesthetics). A number of the contributors to this collection also address the relationship between the aesthetics of nature and environmental ethics, see, for example, Emily Brady, "Aesthetic Character and Aesthetic Integrity in Environmental Conservation," *Environmental Ethics* 24 (2002): 75-91, and "Aesthetics, Ethics and the Natural Environment," in *Environment and the Arts*; Allen Carlson, "Aesthetic Appreciation of the Natural Environment," in *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*, Second Edition, eds. R.G. Botzler and S.J. Armstrong (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998); Marcia Muelder Eaton, "The Beauty that Requires Health," in *Placing Nature: Culture and Landscape Ecology*, ed. J.I. Nassauer (Washington, DC: Island Press 1997); Stan Godlovitch, "Aesthetic Protectionism," *The Journal of Applied Philosophy* 6 (1989): 171-180; Holmes Rolston III, "From Beauty to Duty: Aesthetics of Nature and Environmental Ethics," in *Environment and the Arts*; Yuriko Saito, "Environmental Directions for Aesthetics and the Arts," in *Environment and the Arts*, and "Ecological Design: Promises and Challenges," *Environmental Ethics* 24 (2002): 243-261. For other sources on the relationship between the aesthetics of nature and environmental ethics, see note 65. Concerning the connections between positive aesthetics and environmental ethics, see note 28. On the broader issue of the relationship between the aesthetics of nature and applied research in general, see note 24.
- 28 The initial discussion of this issue is in Carlson, "Nature and Positive Aesthetics." Follow-up discussions include Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), Chapter 6; Eugene Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics* (Englewood

- Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1989), Chapter 6; Jenna Thompson, "Aesthetics and the Value of Nature," *Environmental Ethics* 17 (1995): 291-305; Stan Godlovitch, "Evaluating Nature Aesthetically," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 113-125, and "Valuing Nature and the Autonomy of Natural Aesthetics," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 38 (1998): 180-197; Yuriko Saito, "The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 101-111; Malcolm Budd, "The Aesthetics of Nature," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 100 (2000): 137-157; Eugene Hargrove, "Carlson and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *Philosophy and Geography* 5 (2002): 213-223; Allen Carlson, "Hargrove, Positive Aesthetics, and Indifferent Creativity," *Philosophy and Geography* 5 (2002): 224-234; Glenn Parsons, "Nature Appreciation, Science, and Positive Aesthetics," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 42 (2002): 279-295.
- 29 The classic version of the aesthetic attitude theory is Jerome Stolnitz, *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art Criticism: A Critical Introduction* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960); the most famous example of the attack is George Dickie, "The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1 (1964): 56-65.
 - 30 Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992) [Chapter 11 of *Aesthetics of Environment*, "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature," is reprinted in this volume, Chapter 3]. See also Berleant's "Aesthetic Paradigms for an Urban Ecology," *Diogenes* 103 (1978): 1-28; "The Viewer in the Landscape," *EDRA 13: Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the Environmental Design Research Association* (Washington, DC: EDRA, 1982): 161-165; "Toward a Phenomenological Aesthetics of Environment," in *Descriptions*, ed. H. Silverman and D. Idhe (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985); "The Environment as an Aesthetic Paradigm," *Dialectics and Humanism* 15 (1988): 95-106; "Two Paths through the Landscape," in *Art and Landscape*, ed. G.L. Anagnostopoulos (Athens: The Michelis Foundation, 2001); "The Fluid Environment," in *Coastal Aesthetics*, ed. C. Foster (Lahti, Finland: International Institute of Applied Aesthetics, 2003); "Aesthetics in Place," *Proceedings of Conference on Constructing Place* (forthcoming); as well as two of Berleant's other books: *Art and Engagement*, cited in note 9, and *Living in the Landscape: Toward an Aesthetics of Environment* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997). In addition, see the introduction, "Art, Environment and the Shaping of Experience," of his *Environment and the Arts*, as well as his overview essays, cited in note 1, and publications referenced in other notes.
 - 31 Noël Carroll, "On Being Moved By Nature: Between Religion and Natural History," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts* [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 4]. See also Carroll's "Emotion, Appreciation, and Nature," in his *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and "Aesthetic Experience Revisited," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 42 (2002): 145-168. Carlson discusses Carroll's position in "Nature, Aesthetic Appreciation, and Knowledge."
 - 32 Mark Sagoff, "Zuckerman's Dilemma: A Plea for Environmental Ethics," *Hastings Center Report* 21 (1991): 32-40. See also Sagoff's "Has Nature a Good of its Own?" in *Ecosystem Health: New Goals for Environmental Management*, eds. P. Costanza,

- B. Norton, and B.D. Haskell (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1992), as well as "On Preserving the Natural Environment," cited in note 25.
- 33 Cheryl Foster, "The Narrative and the Ambient in Environmental Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 127-137 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 11]. See also Foster's "Aesthetic Disillusionment: Environment, Ethics, Art," *Environmental Values* 1 (1992): 205-215; "Schopenhauer's Subtext on Natural Beauty," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 32 (1992): 21-32; "Nature and Artistic Creation," *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, Volume 3, pp. 338-341; "Texture: Old Material, Fresh Novelty," in *Aesthetics in the Human Environment*, eds. P. von Bonsdorff and A. Haapala (Lahti, Finland: International Institute of Applied Aesthetics, 1999); "Restoring Nature in American Culture," in *Restoring Nature: Perspectives from the Social Sciences and Humanities*, eds. P.H. Gobster and R. Bruce Hull (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2000); and "I've Looked at Clouds from Both Sides Now: Can There Be Aesthetic Qualities in Nature?" in *Aesthetics Concepts: Essays After Sibley*, eds. E. Brady and J. Levinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).
- 34 Stan Godlovitch, "Icebreakers: Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics," *The Journal of Applied Philosophy* 11 (1994): 15-30 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 5]. See also Godlovitch's "Ontology, Epistemic Access, and the Sublime," *Iyyun: Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 64 (1995): 55-72; "Carlson on Appreciation," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55 (1997): 53-55; "Offending Against Nature," *Environmental Values* 7 (1998): 131-150; "Theoretical Options for Environmental Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 31 (1998): 17-27; "Creativity in Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 33 (1999): 17-26; "Natural Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 33 (1999): 1-4; as well as Godlovitch's articles cited in note 27: "Aesthetic Protectionism"; and in note 28: "Evaluating Nature Aesthetically" and "Valuing Nature and the Autonomy of Natural Aesthetics." Carlson discusses Godlovitch's "Icebreakers" position in "Appreciating Godlovitch," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55 (1997): 55-57 and in "Nature, Aesthetic Appreciation, and Knowledge."
- 35 Ronald Hepburn, "Landscape and the Metaphysical Imagination," *Environmental Values* 5 (1996): 191-204 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 6]. In addition to his classic "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty," cited in note 17, see also Hepburn's "Godfrey Goodman: Nature Vilified," *The Cambridge Journal* 7 (1954): 424-434; "George Hakewill: The Virility of Nature," *The Journal of the History of Ideas* 16 (1955): 135-150; "Nature in the Light of Art," in *Philosophy and the Arts*, ed. G. Vesey (London: Macmillan 1973); "Wonder," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume 54 (1980): 1-23; "The Concept of the Sublime: Has it any Relevance for Philosophy Today?" *Dialectics and Humanism* 15 (1988): 137-155; "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*; "Data and Theory in Aesthetics: Philosophical Understanding and Misunderstanding," in *Verstehen and Humane Understanding*, ed. A. O'Hear, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), reprinted, with some changes, in *Environment and the Arts*; "Nature Humanised: Nature Respected," *Envi-*

- ronmental Values* 7 (1998): 267-279; "Values and Cosmic Imagination," in *The Good, the True and the Beautiful: Enquiries into Contemporary Value Theory*, ed. A. O'Hear, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and especially two of Hepburn's books: *"Wonder" and Other Essays: Eight Studies in Aesthetics and Neighbouring Fields* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984) and *The Reach of the Aesthetic: Collected Essays on Art and Nature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001). For references to some of Hepburn's publications on religion and the aesthetics of nature, such as his "Restoring the Sacred: Sacred as a Concept of Aesthetics," see note 59. Also of interest is a related piece in Vesey's *Philosophy and the Arts*, Andrew Forge's "Art/Nature."
- 36 Emily Brady, "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 139-47 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 8]. See also Brady's "Imagination, Aesthetic Experience and Nature," in *Real World Design*; "Don't Eat the Daisies: Disinterestedness and the Situated Aesthetic," *Environmental Values* 7 (1998): 97-114; "Rooted Art?: Environmental Art and Our Attachment to Nature," *IO: Internet Journal of Applied Aesthetics* 1 (1998): <www.ipt.fi/io/io98/brady.html>; "Interpreting Environments," *Essays in Philosophy* 3 (2002): <www.humboldt.edu/~essays/> (3/1 is a theme issue of *Essays in Philosophy* on environmental aesthetics); "Sniffing and Savoring: The Aesthetics of Smells and Tastes," in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, eds. A. Light and J.M. Smith (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2002); and especially her *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003). In addition, see Brady's overview essay, cited in note 2, as well as "Aesthetic Character and Aesthetic Integrity in Environmental Conservation" and "Aesthetics, Ethics and the Natural Environment," both cited in note 27.
- 37 Yuriko Saito, "Appreciating Nature on its Own Terms," *Environmental Ethics* 20 (1998): 135-149 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 7]. See also Saito's "Is There a Correct Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature?" *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 18 (1984): 35-46; "The Japanese Appreciation of Nature," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 25 (1985): 239-251; "The Japanese Love of Nature: a Paradox," *Landscape* 31 (1991): 1-8; "The Japanese Gardens: the Art of Improving Nature," *Chanoyu Quarterly* 83 (1996): 40-61; "Japanese Aesthetics—an Overview" and "Japanese Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, Volume 2, pp. 545-553 and Volume 3, pp. 343-346; "Scenic National Landscapes: Common Themes in Japan and the United States," *Essays in Philosophy* 3 (2002): <www.humboldt.edu/~essays/>; "The Aesthetics of Weather," in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*; as well as "Environmental Directions for Aesthetics and the Arts" and "Ecological Design: Promises and Challenges," both cited in note 27, and "The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature," cited in note 28.
- 38 Marcia Muelder Eaton, "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 149-156 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 9]. See also Eaton's "Responding to the Call for New Landscape Metaphors," *Landscape Journal* 9 (1990): 22-27; "Dangerous Beauties," *Philosophic*

- Exchange* 30 (1999-2000); "Aesthetic Assessments of Multi-Functional Landscapes," (forthcoming); as well as her works cited in note 24, *Aesthetics and the Good Life* and "The Role of Aesthetics in Designing Sustainable Landscapes," and in note 27, "The Beauty that Requires Health."
- 39 See Holmes Rolston III, "Does Aesthetic Appreciation of Landscapes Need to be Science-Based?" *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 35 (1995): 374-386. For additional references to Rolston's research on the aesthetics of nature, see note 40. The role of science in aesthetic appreciation of nature is also developed and defended in Patricia Matthews, "Scientific Knowledge and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60 (2002): 37-48. See also Parsons, "Nature Appreciation, Science, and Positive Aesthetics."
- 40 Holmes Rolston III, "The Aesthetic Experience of Forests," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 155-166 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 10]. See also Rolston's "The Pasqueflower," *Natural History* 88 (1979): 6-16; "Beauty and the Beast: Aesthetic Experience of Wildlife," in *Valuing Wildlife Resources: Economic and Social Perspectives*, eds. D.J. Decker and G. Goff (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987); "Landscape from Eighteenth Century to the Present," *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, Volume 3, pp. 93-99; "Aesthetics in the Swamps," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 43 (2000): 584-597; as well as Chapter 6 of his *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World*, cited in note 28. In addition, see "From Beauty to Duty: Aesthetics of Nature and Environmental Ethics," cited in note 27, and "Does Aesthetic Appreciation of Landscapes Need to be Science- Based?" cited in note 39. "The Pasqueflower," along with other essays of aesthetic interest, such as "Mystery and Majesty in Washington County" and "Lake Solitude: The Individual in Wildness," is reprinted in Rolston's *Philosophy Gone Wild* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1986).
- 41 See, for example, Pauline von Bonsdorff, "'Nature' in Experience: Body and Environment," *Nordisk Estetisk Tidskrift/The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 19 (1999): 111-128; J.M. Howarth, "Nature's Moods," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 35 (1995): 108-120; and Barbara Sandrisser, "Cultivating Commonplaces: Sophisticated Vernacularism in Japan," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 201-210.
- 42 Foster, "The Narrative and the Ambient in Environmental Aesthetics" [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 11]. For additional references to Foster's work on the aesthetics of nature, see note 33.
- 43 Ronald Moore, "Appreciating Natural Beauty as Natural," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 33 (1999): 42-59 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 12]. The split that Moore, Foster, and others see in contemporary research in the aesthetics of nature is also discussed, with reference in particular to the science-based approach and the role of imagination, in Robert Fudge, "Imagination and the Science-based Aesthetic Appreciation of Unscenic Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59 (2001): 275-285.
- 44 Budd, "The Aesthetics of Nature." See also Budd's "The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 36 (1996): 207-222, as well as his

- overview essay and his study of Kant on the aesthetics of nature, cited in notes 2 and 3, respectively. Versions of all these essays can be found in Budd's *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- 45 Thompson, "Aesthetics and the Value of Nature."
- 46 John A. Fisher, "What the Hills Are Alive With: In Defense of the Sounds of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 167-179 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 13]. See also Fisher's "The Value of Natural Sounds," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 33 (1999): 26-42 and "Aesthetics;" in *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, ed. D. Jamieson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp. 264-276, as well as his overview essay on environmental aesthetics cited in note 1.
- 47 See, for example, Callicott's "The Land Aesthetic," or the essay by the same title in *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*. In the latter, he puts the charge against artistic models of the appreciation of nature in the strongest terms: "We continue to admire and preserve primarily 'landscapes,' 'scenery,' and 'views' according to essentially eighteenth century standards of taste inherited from Glipin, Price, and their contemporaries. Our tastes in natural beauty...remain fixed on visual and formal properties ...The prevailing natural aesthetic, therefore, is not autonomous: it does not flow naturally from nature itself; it is not directly oriented to nature on nature's own terms... It is superficial and narcissistic. In a word, it is trivial." Other versions of this essay appear in *Orion Nature Quarterly* 3 (1984): 16-22, and *Renewable Resources Journal* 10 (1992): 12-17.
- 48 Robert Stecker, "The Correct and the Appropriate in the Appreciation of Nature," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 37 (1997): 393-402.
- 49 Ira Newman, "Reflections on Allen Carlson's Aesthetics and the Environment," *AE: Canadian Aesthetics Journal/Revue canadienne d'esthétique* 6 (2001): <www.uqtr.quebec.ca/AE/Vol_6/Carlson/newman.html>. See also Newman's "The Dream of an Autonomous Natural Aesthetic: Leopold and Callicott on the Land Aesthetic," in *The Beauty Around Us: Environmental Aesthetics in the Scenic Landscape and Beyond*, ed. Diane Michelfelder and William Wilcox (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2004). Other essays in the Michelfelder and Wilcox collection are also of interest. Carlson discusses Newman's formalism in "Heyd and Newman on the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *AE: Canadian Aesthetics Journal/Revue canadienne d'esthétique* 6 (2001): <www.uqtr.quebec.ca/AE/Vol_6/Carlson/carlson.html>. Various degrees of formalism in the aesthetic appreciation of nature are also defended in Nick Zangwill, "Formal Natural Beauty," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 101 (2001): 209-224; and Patricia Matthews, "Aesthetic Appreciation of Art and Nature," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 41 (2001): 395-410.
- 50 Donald W. Crawford, "Scenery and the Aesthetics of Nature," [in this volume, Chapter 14] Also see Crawford's "Comparing Natural and Artistic Beauty," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*; "Art into Nature: Decoration, Incursion, or Revelation?" in *The Reasons of Art: L'Art a ses raisons*, ed. P. McCormick (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1985); "Aesthetic Nature, Art and Culture," in *Art and Culture*, eds. A. Balis, L. Aagaard-Mogensen, R. Pinxten, and F. Vandamme (Ghent, Belgium: Com-

- munication in Cognition, 1985); "The Place of the Sublime in Kant's Aesthetic Theory," in *The Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, ed. R. Kennington (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985); "Nature and Art: Some Dialectical Relationships," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 42 (1983): 49-58; "Artistic Creativity and the Aesthetics of Nature," in *Proceedings of the 9th International Congress on Aesthetics* (Beograd, Yugoslavia: ICA, 1980); as well as his overview essay cited in note 2.
- 51 Thomas Heyd, "Aesthetic Appreciation and the Many Stories about Nature," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 41 (2001): 125-137 [reprinted in the volume, Chapter 15]. See also Heyd's "Northern Plains Boulder Structures: Art and Foucauldian Heterotopias," in *Foucault and the Environment*, ed. É. Darier (London: Routledge, 1998); "Rock Art Aesthetics: Trace on Rock, Mark of Spirit, Window on Land," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57 (1999): 451-458; "Appreciating Aboriginal Australia's Art on Rock," *Cultural and Regional Aesthetics* (Lahti, Finland: International Institute for Applied Aesthetics, 2002): <www.lpt.fi/io/australian.htm> "Nature Restoration Without Dissimulation: Learning from Japanese Gardens and Earthworks," *Essays in Philosophy* 3 (2002): <www.humboldt.edu/~essays/>; "Understanding Japanese Gardens and Earthworks on the Way to Understanding Nature Restoration" and "Querying Allen Carlson's *Aesthetics and the Environment*," both in *AE: Canadian Aesthetics Journal/Revue canadienne d'esthétique* 6 (2001): <www.uqtr.quebec.ca/AE/Vol_6/index.html>. Carlson responds to Heyd's contentions in "Heyd and Newman on the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature." In the same issue of *AE*, see also Denis Dumas, "L'esthétique environnementale d'Allen Carlson: Cognitivisme et appréciation esthétique de la nature": <www.uqtr.quebec.ca/AE/Vol_6/Carlson/dumas.html>.
 - 52 Compare classic studies such as, for example, A. Biese's *The Development of the Feeling for Nature in the Middle Ages and Modern Times* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1905) or Marjory Hope Nicolson's *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1959).
 - 53 Yi-Fu Tuan's extensive contribution to our understanding of nature and of our place in it are elaborated in numerous articles and books; three of the latter are especially noteworthy here: *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1974); *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977); and *Passing Strange and Wonderful: Aesthetics, Nature, and Culture* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1993). On this topic, see also the individuals and writings cited in notes 64 and 66.
 - 54 See, for example, Allen Carlson, "Landscape and Literature," in *Aesthetics and the Environment*.
 - 55 For example, on film, see K.I. Helphand, "Landscape Films," *Landscape Journal* 5 (1986): 1-8 or A.P. Sitney, "Landscape in the Cinema: The Rhythms of the World and the Camera," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*; on environmental art, Allen Carlson, "Is Environmental Art an Aesthetic Affront to Nature?" *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 16 (1986): 635-50 or Stephanie Ross "Gardens, Earthworks, and Environmental Art," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*; and on painting, G. Cran-

- dell, *Nature Pictorialized: "The View" in Landscape History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) or C. Klonk, *Science and the Perception of Nature: British Landscape Art in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).
- 56 The works of the individuals listed are so extensive and so well known that it is neither practical nor necessary to reference them here. However, the following three collections provide a sample of the writings of many of these individuals, along with numerous others of equal note: W. Beebe, ed., *The Book of Naturalists: An Anthology of the Best Natural History* [1944] (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); D. Halpern, ed., *On Nature: Nature, Landscape, and Natural History* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987); S. Trimble, ed., *Words from the Land: Encounters with Natural History Writing* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs M. Smith, 1988). The Beebe volume is historically oriented and focuses on natural history writing, while the other two contain mainly contemporary work more straightforwardly classifiable as nature writing. The Halpern has a useful annotated booklist as well as an excellent bibliography. Also of interest, in that they are the contributions of working naturalists, are the short pieces gathered together in J.K. Terres, ed., *Discovery: Great Moments in the Lives of Outstanding Naturalists* (New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1961). These four collections feature writers who have primarily biological and ecological interests; for a selection of writings reflecting geological interests, see F.H.T. Rhodes and R.O. Stone, eds., *Language of the Earth* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1981).
- 57 Yrjö Sepänmaa, *The Beauty of Environment: A General Model for Environmental Aesthetics* (Helsinki: Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, 1986), Second Edition (Denton: Environmental Ethics Books, 1993). Sepänmaa's volume is a detailed study of a wide range of important issues in environmental aesthetics with an excellent bibliography of relevant philosophical research. For references to Sepänmaa's other publications in environmental aesthetics, see note 58.
- 58 Yrjö Sepänmaa, "Environmental Stories: Speaking and Writing Nature," *Nordisk Estetisk Tidskrift/The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 19 (1999): 73-85 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 16]. See also Sepänmaa's "Towards Synthetic Beauty: The Environment as a Total Work of Art," in *Place in Space: Human Culture in Landscape*, eds. H. Svobodová and J. Uhde (Wageningen, Netherlands: Pudoc Scientific Publishers, 1993); "Applied Aesthetics," in *Art and Beyond: Finnish Approaches to Aesthetics*, eds. O. Naukkarinen and O. Immonen (Lahti, Finland: International Institute of Applied Aesthetics, 1995); "An Aesthetician's Concern for the Forest," in *Finnish Forests*, ed. L.L. Opas (Joensuu, Finland: University of Joensuu, 1997); "Aesthetics in Practice: Prolegomenon," in *Practical Aesthetics in Practice and Theory*, ed. M. Honkanen (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1997); "Ecological Aesthetics and Humanism," in *Aesthetics in the Human Environment*; "The Two Aesthetic Cultures: The Great Analogy of Art and Environment," in *Environment and the Arts*; and especially his *The Beauty of Environment*, cited in note 57.
- 59 Hepburn discusses the role of the religious in aesthetic appreciation of nature in, for example, his "Aesthetic and Religious: Boundaries, Overlaps, and Intrusions," in *Real*

- World Design*; "Restoring the Sacred: Sacred as a Concept of Aesthetics," in *Aesthetics in the Human Environment*; and "Religious Experience," in *Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, ed. A. Hastings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Also of interest in this regard is T.J. Diffey, "Natural Beauty without Metaphysics," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, and David Cooper, "Aestheticism and Environmentalism," in *Spirit of the Environment: Religion, Value and Environmental Concern*, eds. D. Cooper and J. Palmer (London: Routledge, 1998).
- 60 This, as well as other famous observations on nature by Wilde, such as, for example, "My own experience is that the more we study Art, the less we care for Nature," appears in "The Decay of Lying" [1891]. See Richard Ellmann, ed., *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 290-320. Also note the following remark by E.H. Gombrich in "The Renaissance Theory of Art and the Rise of Landscape," in *Norm and Form: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1971), pp. 117-118: "...I believe that the idea of natural beauty as an inspiration of art...is, to say the least, a very dangerous oversimplification. Perhaps it even reverses the actual process by which man discovers the beauty of nature. We call a scenery 'picturesque'...if it reminds us of paintings we have seen.... Similarly, so it seems, the discovery of Alpine scenery does not precede but follows the spread of prints and paintings with mountain panoramas." For other classic sources relevant to this point, see note 52.
- 61 For example, see Carlson, "Between Nature and Art," in *Aesthetics and the Environment* and, "On Appreciating Agricultural Landscapes," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43 (1985): 301-312.
- 62 On the connections between the aesthetics of nature and the aesthetics of our human created environments, see essays by Arnold Berleant such as "Aesthetic Participation and the Urban Environment," *Urban Resources* 1 (1984): 37-42; "Cultivating an Urban Aesthetic," *Diogenes* 136 (1986): 1-18; and "The Critical Aesthetics of Disney World," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 11 (1994): 171-180; as well as Allen Carlson's "On Aesthetically Appreciating Human Environments," *Philosophy and Geography* 4 (2001): 9-24. The aesthetics of our smaller living spaces is thoughtfully discussed in Tuan, *Passing Strange and Wonderful*; Tom Leddy "Everyday Surface Qualities: 'Neat,' 'Messy,' 'Clean,' 'Dirty,'" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53 (1995): 259-268; Kevin Melchionne, "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration, and Environmental Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 191-200; and Kevin Melchionne, "Front Yards," in *Environment and the Arts*. See also the collection of essays edited by A. Light and J.M. Smith, *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*.
- 63 Two important philosophical studies of gardens are Mara Miller, *The Garden As Art* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993) and Stephanie Ross, *What Gardens Mean* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). On the relationships between the aesthetics of nature and architecture, see Arnold Berleant, "Architecture and the Aesthetics of Continuity," and Allen Carlson, "Existence, Location, and Function: The Appreciation of Architecture," both in *Philosophy and Architecture*, ed. M. Mitias (Amsterdam:

- Rodopi, 1994); and Robert Stecker, "Reflections on Architecture: Buildings as Art-works, Aesthetic Objects, and Artificial Environments," and Allen Carlson, "The Aesthetic Appreciation of Everyday Architecture," both in *Architecture and Civilization*, ed. M. Mitias (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999). Each of the two philosophy of architecture collections edited by Mitias have a number of interesting studies of the aesthetics of architecture, although most do not concern its relationships to the aesthetics of nature.
- 64 Three landscape critics who excel in illuminating landscapes "on their own terms" are Hoskins, Jackson, and Watts. See W.G. Hoskins' classic, *The Making of the English Landscape* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1955). There are a number of collections of Jackson's essays: J.B. Jackson, *Landscapes: Selected Writings of J.B. Jackson*, ed. E.H. Zube (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970); *The Necessity for Ruins and Other Topics* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980); *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); and *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994). May Theilgaard Watts' classic work, *Reading the Landscape of America* [1957] (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1975), is an excellent landscape guidebook, which features a near perfect blend of natural and cultural history. In addition to Hoskins, Jackson, and Watts, there are, of course, many other individuals, most notably cultural geographers, whose writings illuminate the landscapes we have created. Many of them appear in the pages of the journal that Jackson founded and edited for many years, *Landscape*, and more recently in the more academic *Landscape Journal*. A number of the works cited in note 66 illustrate this kind of material. For example, the Meinig and the Conzen collections provide an earlier as well as a more recent sample. The latter has a valuable bibliography. David E.W. Fenner explores the role of the environmental critic in comparison with that of the art critic in "Aesthetic Appreciation in the Artworld and in the Natural World," *Environmental Values* 12 (2003).
- 65 The tradition goes back at least to Henry David Thoreau and perhaps reached its climax in John Muir. See works such as Muir's *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916) and *Our National Parks* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916). For example, in "The Land Aesthetic" in *Companion to a Sand County Almanac: Interpretive and Critical Essays*, Callicott notes: "Historically...many more of our conservation and preservation decisions have been motivated by beauty than by duty" (p. 158). On the same issue, also see Eugene Hargrove, "The Historical Foundations of American Environmental Attitudes," *Environmental Ethics* 1 (1979): 209-240, as well as his *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*, Chapter 3. Also of interest concerning the relationship between the aesthetics of nature and environmental ethics are Robert Elliot, "Environmental Degradation, Vandalism and the Aesthetic Object Argument," *The Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 67 (1989): 191-204; Jenna Thompson, "Aesthetics and the Value of Nature"; Tony Lynch, "Deep Ecology as an Aesthetic Movement," *Environmental Values* 5 (1996): 147-160; T.J. Diffey, "Arguing about the Environment," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 40 (2000): 133-148. Research on this topic by the contributors to this collection is cited in note 27.

- 66 In addition to the sources relevant to these issues that are cited in notes 20-24, the following collections are especially useful: M.P. Conzen, ed., *The Making of the American Landscape* (London: Harper Collins Academic, 1990); Groth, ed., *Vision, Culture, and Landscape: The Berkeley Symposium on Cultural Landscape Interpretation*; P. Groth, and T.W. Bressi, eds., *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); D.W. Meinig, ed., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Nassauer, ed., *Placing Nature: Culture and Landscape Ecology*; Penning-Roswell and Lowenthal, eds., *Landscape Meanings and Values*.

Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty¹

Ronald Hepburn



I.

Open an eighteenth-century work on aesthetics, and the odds are that it will contain a substantial treatment of the beautiful, the sublime, the picturesque in nature.² Its treatment of art may be secondary and derivative, not its primary concern. Although the nineteenth century could not be said to repeat these same emphases, they certainly reappear in some impressive places, in Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, for instance—a work that might have been entitled, no less accurately, “How to look at nature and enjoy it aesthetically.” In our own day, however, writings on aesthetics attend almost exclusively to the arts and very rarely indeed to natural beauty, or only in the most perfunctory manner. Aesthetics is even *defined* by some mid-century writers as “the philosophy of art,” “the philosophy of criticism,” analysis of the language and concepts used in describing and appraising art objects. Two much-quoted anthologies of aesthetics (Elton's in the United Kingdom, Vivas and Krieger's in America) contain not a single study of natural beauty.³

Why has this curious shift come about? For part of the answer we have to look not to philosophers' theories but to some general shifts in aesthetic taste itself. This is a legitimate procedure, since, despite the difference of logical level between them, judgements of taste and the theorizings of aesthetics exert unmistakable influences upon one another. Relevant facts, then, are these: that—for all the cult of the open air, the caravans, camps, and excursions in the family car—serious aesthetic concern with nature is today rather a rare phenomenon. If we regard the Wordsworthian vision as the great peak in the recent history of the subject, then we have to say that the ground declined very sharply indeed from that extraordinary summit, and that today we survey it from far below. In one direction it quickly declined to the depths of the romantics' own “dejection” experiences, and in another to the forced ecstasies and hypocrisies of a fashionable and trivialized nature cult. At its most deeply felt, the Wordsworthian experience brought a rekindling of religious imagination for some who found it no longer sustained by the traditional dogmas. But a still more radical loss of religious confidence came to undermine the undogmatic Wordsworthian experience itself.

The vanishing of the sense that nature is our “educator,” that its beauties communicate more or less specific morally ennobling messages, this is only one aspect of the general (and much anatomized) disappearance of a rationalist faith in nature’s thorough-going intelligibility and in its ultimate endorsement of human visions and aspirations. The characteristic image of contemporary humanity, as we all know, is that of a “stranger,” encompassed by a nature that is indifferent, unmeaning, and “absurd.”

The work of the sciences, too, has tended to increase bewilderment and loss of nerve over the aesthetic interpretation of nature. Microscope and telescope have added vastly to our perceptual data; the forms of the ordinary landscape, ordinarily interpreted, are shown up as only a selection from countless different scales.

It is not surprising that (with a few exceptions) the artists themselves have turned from imitation and representation to the sheer creation of new objects, rewarding to contemplate in their own right. If they are expressive of more than purely formal relationships, then that “more” tends to be not the alien external landscape but the inner landscape of the human psyche.

On the theoretical level, there are other and distinctive reasons for the neglect of natural beauty in aesthetics itself, especially in an aesthetics that seeks to make itself increasingly rigorous. One such reason is that, if we are aiming at an entirely general account of aesthetic excellence, this account cannot make essential reference to experience of (or imitation of) nature, since there are arts like music that are devoid of any such reference. Some writers have been impressed by the fact that certain crucial features of aesthetic experience are quite unobtainable in nature—a landscape does not minutely control the spectator’s response to it as does a successful work of art; it is an unframed ordinary object, in contrast to the framed, “esoteric,” “illusory,” or “virtual” character of the art object. And so the artifact is taken as the aesthetic object *par excellence*, and the proper focus of study.

Although it is now very much in eclipse, the last widely accepted unified aesthetic system was the expression theory. No single new system has taken its place; and some of its influences are still with us. The expression theory is a *communication* theory: it must represent aesthetic experience of nature either as communication from the Author of Nature, which it rarely does, or else (rather awkwardly) as the discovery that nature’s shapes and colors can with luck serve as expressive vehicles of human feeling, although never constructed for that end.⁴ The theory most readily copes with artifacts, not natural objects; with successful interpersonal communication, not the contemplation of sheer entities *as* entities. Although some very recent aesthetic analyses provide instruments that could be used to redress the lopsidedness of these emphases, they have not yet been applied extensively to this task.⁵

We may note, finally, that linguistic or conceptual analysts have been understandably tempted to apply their techniques first and foremost to the arguments,

counter-arguments, and manifestoes lying to hand in the writings of critics of the arts. In the case of natural beauty, however, such a polemical critical literature scarcely exists. Philosophers must first work out their own detailed and systematic account of the aesthetic enjoyment of nature. And this they have so far been slow, or reluctant, to do.

Having outlined the situation, the neglect of the study of natural beauty, I now want to argue that the neglect is a very bad thing: bad because aesthetics is thereby steered off from examining an important and richly complex set of relevant data; and bad because when a set of human experiences is ignored in a theory relevant to them, they tend to be rendered less readily available as experiences. If we cannot find sensible sounding language in which to describe them—language of a piece with the rest of our aesthetic talk—the experiences are felt, in an embarrassed way, as off-the-map; and, since off the map, seldom visited. This result is especially unfortunate if for other reasons the experiences are already hard to achieve—in some of their varieties at least. What, then, can contemporary aesthetics say on the topic of natural beauty?

II.

First, we have already remarked that art objects have a number of general characteristics not shared by objects in nature. It would be useful if we could show (and I think we can) that the absence of certain of these features is not merely negative or privative in its effect, but can contribute positively and valuably to the aesthetic experience of nature. A good specimen is the degree to which the spectator can be involved in the natural aesthetic situation itself. On occasion, he may confront natural objects as a static, disengaged observer; but far more typically the objects envelop him on all sides. In a forest, trees surround him; he is ringed by hills, or he stands in the midst of a plain. If there is movement in the scene, the spectator may himself be in motion, and his motion may be an important element in his aesthetic experience. Think, for instance, of a glider pilot, delighting in a sense of buoyancy, in the balancing of the air currents that hold him aloft. This sort of involvement is well expressed by Barbara Hepworth: “What a different shape and ‘being’ one becomes lying on the sand with the sea almost above from when standing against the wind on a sheer high cliff with seabirds circling patterns below one.”⁶

We have not only a mutual involvement of spectator and object, but also a reflexive effect by which the spectator experiences *himself* in an unusual and vivid way; and this difference is not merely noted, but dwelt upon aesthetically. The effect is not unknown to art, especially architecture. But it is both more intensely realized and pervasive in nature experience, for we are *in* nature and a *part of* nature; we do not stand over against it as over against a painting on a wall.

If this study were on a larger scale, we should have to analyze in detail the var-

ious senses of “detachment” and “involvement” that are relevant here. This would prove a more slippery investigation than in the case of art appreciation; but a rewarding one. Some sort of detachment there certainly is, in the sense that I am not *using* nature, manipulating it, or calculating how to manipulate it. But I am both actor and spectator, ingredient in the landscape and lingering upon the sensations of being thus ingredient, rejoicing in their multifariousness, playing actively with nature, and letting nature, as it were, play with me and my sense of myself.

My second specimen is very similar, though, I think, worth listing separately. Though by no means all art objects have frames or pedestals, they share a common character in being set *apart* from their environment, and set apart in a distinctive way. We might use the words “frame” and “framed” in an extended sense, to cover not only the physical boundaries of pictures but all the various devices employed in the different arts to prevent the art object being mistaken for a natural object or for an artifact without aesthetic interest. Our list of frames, in this wide sense, would include the division between stage area and audience area in the theatre, the concert convention that the only aesthetically relevant sounds are those made by the performers, the layout of a page in a book of poems, where typography and spacing set the poem apart from titles, page numbers, critical apparatus, and footnotes. Such devices are best thought of as aids to the recognition of the formal *completeness* of the art objects themselves, their ability to sustain aesthetic interest, an interest that is not crucially dependent upon the relationships between the object and its general environment. Certainly, its environment may enhance or weaken its effect; and we may even see parts of the environment in a new way as a result of contemplating an art object. But this does not affect the central point, that these works of art are first and foremost bounded objects, that their aesthetic characteristics are determined by their internal structure, the interplay of their elements.

In contrast, natural objects are “frameless.” This is in some ways a disadvantage aesthetically; but there are some remarkable compensating advantages. Whatever lies beyond the frame of an art object cannot normally become part of the aesthetic experience relevant to it. A chance train whistle cannot be integrated into the music of a string quartet; it merely interferes with its appreciation. But where there is no frame, and where nature is our aesthetic object, a sound or a visible intrusion from beyond the original boundaries of our attention can challenge us to integrate it in our overall experience, to modify that experience so as to make room for it. This, of course, *need* not occur; we may shut it out by effort of will, if it seems quite unassimilable. At any rate, our creativity is challenged, set a task; and when things go well with us, we experience a sudden expansion of imagination that can be memorable in its own right.

And, when there came a pause
Of silence such as baffled his best skill:
Then sometimes, in that silence, while he hung

Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
 Has carried far into his heart the voice
 Of mountain-torrents

Wordsworth: *There Was a Boy*

If the absence of “frame” precludes full determinateness and stability in the natural aesthetic object, it at least offers in return such unpredictable perceptual surprises; and their mere possibility imparts to the contemplation of nature a sense of adventurous openness.⁷

Something more definite can be said on the determinate and indeterminate in this connection. In, say, a painting, the frame ensures that each element of the work is determined in its perceived qualities (including emotional qualities) by a limited and definite context. Color modifies color and form modifies form; yet the frame supplies a boundary to all relevant modifiers, and, thus, any given color or shape can be seen in a successful painting to have a determinate, contextually controlled character. Obviously, this is one kind of determinateness that cannot be achieved with natural objects; and that for several reasons. To consider only one of them: the aesthetic impact made upon us by, say, a tree, is part-determined by the context we include in our view of it. A tree growing on a steep hill slope, bent far over by the winds, may strike us as tenacious, grim, strained. But from a greater distance, when the view includes numerous similar trees on the hillside, the striking thing may be a delightful, stippled, patterned slope, with quite different emotional quality—quixotic or cheery. So with any aesthetic quality in nature; it is always provisional, correctable by reference to a different, perhaps wider context, or to a narrower one realized in greater detail. “An idyllic scene? But you haven’t noticed that advancing, though still distant, thundercloud?” Now that you have noticed it, the whole scene takes on a new, threatened, ominous look. In positive terms this provisional and elusive character of aesthetic qualities in nature creates a restlessness, an alertness, a search for ever-new standpoints, and for more comprehensive gestalten. Of this restlessness and of this search I shall, very shortly, have more to say.

We can distinguish, in a rough and ready way, between the particular aesthetic impact of an object, whether natural or artifactual, and certain general “background” experiences, that are common to a great many aesthetic situations and are of aesthetic value in themselves. With an art object, there is the exhilarating activity of coming to grasp its intelligibility as a perceptual whole. We find built-in guides to interpretation, and contextual controls for our response. We are aware of these features as having been expressly put there by its creator. Now I think that we can locate a nearly parallel but interestingly different background experience when our object is not an artifact but a natural one. Again, it is a kind of exhilaration, in this case a delight in the fact that the forms of the natural world offer *scope* for the exercise of the imagination, that leaf pattern chimes with vein pattern, cloud form with mountain form and mountain form with human form. On a theistic view

this begets a distinctive sort of wonderment at the “artistry” of God. On a naturalistic view it can beget at least no less wonderment at this uncontrived adaptation. Indeed, when nature is pronounced to be “beautiful”—not in the narrower sense of that word, which contrasts “beautiful” with “picturesque” or “comic,” but in the wide sense equivalent to “aesthetically excellent”—an important part of our meaning is just this, that nature’s forms do provide this scope for imaginative play. For that is surely not analytically true; it might have been otherwise.

I have been arguing that certain important differences between natural objects and art objects should not be seen as entailing the aesthetic unimportance of the former, that (on the contrary) several of these differences furnish grounds for distinctive and valuable types of aesthetic experience of nature. These are types of experience that art cannot provide to the same extent as nature, and that in some cases it cannot provide at all.

Supposing that a person’s aesthetic education fails to reckon with these differences, supposing it instills in him the attitudes, the tactics of approach, the expectations proper to the appreciation of art works only, we may be sure that such a person will either pay very little aesthetic heed to natural objects, or else will heed them in the wrong way. He will look—and of course look in vain—for what can be found and enjoyed only in art. Furthermore, one cannot be at all certain that he will seriously ask himself whether there might be other tactics, other attitudes and expectations more proper and more fruitful for the aesthetic appreciation of nature. My sampling of these “differences,” therefore, is not a merely introductory exercise in distinction making. It has the polemical purpose of showing that unless these distinctions are reckoned with both in aesthetic education and theorizing, one can neither intelligently pursue nor adequately comprehend experience of natural beauty, save only in its most rudimentary forms.

III.

So much for the listing of neglects and omissions. I want now to turn to something more constructive, and to take as a starting point certain recurrent and *prima facie* attractive ways in which natural beauty has in fact been attended to and described, both in the past and present. I say “as a starting-point,” because I do not plan to examine in detail specific philosophical theories that have incorporated them. Rather, we shall take note of those approaches, the characteristic vocabulary that goes with them, and inquire how far (if at all) they point to an aesthetic of natural beauty that could be viable today.

Accounts of natural beauty sometimes focus upon the contemplating of single natural objects in their individuality and uniqueness, for example, Pepita Haezrahi’s analysis of the aesthetic contemplation of a single falling leaf.⁸ Other writers, with greater metaphysical daring—or rashness—speak of the enjoyment of natural beauty as tending towards an ideal of “oneness with nature” or as leading to the disclosure of “unity” in nature. The formulations vary greatly and sub-

stantially among themselves; but the vocabulary of unity, oneness as the key aesthetic principle, is the recurrent theme.⁹

There are strong influences in contemporary British philosophy that prompt one to have the fullest sympathy with a particularist approach to natural beauty—as the contemplation of individual objects with their aesthetically interesting perceptual qualities; and to have very little sympathy for the more grandiose, speculative and quasi-mystical language of “oneness with or in nature.” Yet it seems to me that we do not have here one good and one bad aesthetic approach, the first sane and the second absurd. Rather, we have two poles or well-separated landmarks between which lies a range of aesthetic possibilities; and in the mapping of this range those landmarks will play a valuable, perhaps a necessary role.

We must begin by bluntly denying the universal need for unity, unity of form, quality, structure or of anything else. We can take aesthetic pleasure in sheer plurality, in the stars of the night sky, in a birdsong without beginning, middle, or end.¹⁰

And yet to make unity, in some sense, one’s key concept need not be simply wrong-headed or obscurantist. Nor do we have to say, rather limply, that there are two distinct and unrelated types of aesthetic excellence, one that contemplates individual uniqueness and the other—no better or worse—that aims at some grand synthesis. I want to argue that there are certain incompletenesses in the experience of the isolated particular, that produce a *nisus* towards the other pole, the pole of unity. Accuracy, however, will require us to deny that there is a single type of unification or union; there are several notions to be distinguished within the ideal, and the relations between them are quite complex.

One such direction of development we have already noted; namely, the *nisus* towards more and more comprehensive or adequate survey of the context that determines the perceived qualities of a natural object or scene. Our motives are, in part, the desire for a certain integrity or “truth” in our aesthetic experience of nature; and of this more shortly. In part also we are prompted by our awareness that in all aesthetic experience it is contextual complexity that, more than any other single factor, makes possible the minute discrimination of emotional qualities; and such discrimination is accorded high aesthetic value. It is largely the pursuit of such value that moves us to accept what I called “the challenge to integrate”—to take notice of and to accept as aesthetically relevant some shape or sound that initially lies outside the limit of our attention. “Challenge” was not, I think, an overdramatic word to use. For we can contrast the stereotyped experiences of the aesthetically apathetic and unadventurous person with the richly and subtly diversified experiences of the aesthetically courageous person. His courage consists in his refusal to heed only those features of a natural object or scene that most readily come together in a familiar pattern or which yield a comfortingly generalized emotional quality. It also involves taking the repeated risk of drawing a blank, of finding oneself unable to hold the various elements together as a single object of contemplation, or to elicit any significant aesthetic experience from them at all.

The expansion of context may be a spatial expansion, but it does not have to be spatial. What else can it be? When we contemplate a natural object, we may see it not as sand dune or rock but simply as a colored shape. If this is difficult, we can look at the world upside down, with our head between our legs. But although an aesthetic view of an object will strive to shake free from conventional and deadening conceptualizings, that is not to say that *all* interpretations, all “seeings as ...” are lapses to the non-aesthetic. We ought not to accept a dichotomy of “pure aesthetic contemplation”—“impure admixture of associations.” Suppose I am walking over a wide expanse of sand and mud. The quality of the scene is perhaps that of wild, glad emptiness. But suppose that I bring to bear upon the scene my knowledge that this is a tidal basin, the tide being out. The realization is not aesthetically irrelevant. I see myself now as virtually walking on what is for half the day seabed. The wild glad emptiness may be tempered by a disturbing weirdness.

This sort of experience can readily be related to the movement we were examining, the movement towards more complex and comprehensive synopses. In addition to spatial extension (or sometimes instead of it), we may aim at enriching the interpretative element, taking this not as theoretical “knowledge about” the object or scene, but as helping to determine the aesthetic impact it makes upon us. “Unity” here plays a purely “regulative” role. Nature is not a “given whole,” nor indeed is knowledge about it. But in any case, there are practical, psychological limits to the expansion process; a degree of complexity is reached, beyond which there will be no increase in discrimination of perceptual or emotional qualities: rather the reverse.

A second movement away from contemplation of uninterpreted particulars is sometimes known as the “humanizing” or the “spiritualizing” of nature. I shall merely note its existence and relevance here, for there have been a good many accounts of it in the history of aesthetics. Coleridge said that “Art is ... the power of humanizing nature, of infusing the thoughts and passions of man into every thing which is the object of his contemplation.”¹¹ And Hegel, that the aim of art is “to strip the outer world of its stubborn foreignness.”¹² What is here said about art is no less true of aesthetic experience of nature itself. Imaginative activity is working for a *rapprochement* between the spectator and his aesthetic object: unity is again a regulative notion, a symbol of the unattainable complete transmutation of brute external nature into a mirror of the mind.

By developing and qualifying the “humanization” ideal we can come to see yet a third aspect of the *nisus* towards unity. A person who contemplates natural objects aesthetically may sometimes find that their emotional quality is describable in the vocabulary of ordinary human moods and feelings—melancholy, exuberance, placidity. In many cases, however, he will find that they are not at all accurately describable in such terms. A particular emotional quality can be roughly *analogous* to some nameable human emotion, desolation for instance; but the precise quality of desolation revealed in some waste or desert in nature may be quite distinctive in timbre and intensity. To put this another way: one may go to

nature to find shapes and sounds that can be taken as the embodiment of human emotion, and in so far as this occurs, nature is felt to be humanized. But instead of nature being humanized, the reverse may happen. Aesthetic experience of nature may be experience of a range of emotion that the human scene, by itself, untutored and unsupplemented, could not evoke. To extend the scope of these remarks, recall once again our quotation from Barbara Hepworth. To be “one” with nature in that sense was to realize vividly one’s place in the landscape, as a form among its forms. And this is not to have nature’s “foreignness” or otherness overcome, but in contrast, to allow that otherness free play in the modifying of one’s everyday sense of one’s own being.

In this domain, again, we need not confine ourselves to the contemplating of naked, uninterpreted particulars. In a leaf-pattern I may “see” also blood-vessel patterns, or the patterns of branching, forked lightning; or all of these. In a spiral nebula pattern I may see the pattern of swirling waters or whirling dust. I may be aware of a network of affinities, of analogous forms, that spans the inorganic or the organic world, or both. My experience has a quality of *multum in parvo*.¹³ This is not necessarily a “humanizing” of nature; it may be more like a “naturizing” of the human observer. If, with T.S. Eliot, one sees “The dance along the artery/The circulation of the lymph” as “figured in the drift of stars,” something of the aesthetic qualities of the latter (as we perceive them) may come to be transferred to the former. Supposing that by this kind of aesthetic experience nature is felt to lose some of its “foreignness,” that may be because we have ourselves become foreign to our everyday, unexamined notion of ourselves, and not through any assimilation of nature’s forms to pre-existent notions, images, or perceptions.

A fourth class of approaches to the ideals of “unity” is itself rather heterogeneous; but we can characterize its members as follows. They are, once again, concerned less with the specific content of particular aesthetic experiences than with what we have called the “background” quality of emotions and attitudes, common to a great many individual experiences. In their case the background is a sense of reconciliation, suspension of conflict, and of being in that sense at one with the aesthetic object. This particular sort of “at-one-ness” could hardly be present in art experience, since it requires that the aesthetic object should be at the same time the natural environment or some part of it. This is the same environment from which we wrest our food, from which we have to protect ourselves in order to live, which refuses to sustain our individual lives beyond a limited term, and to which we are finally “united” in a manner far different from those envisaged in the aesthetic ideals of “unity”: “Rolled round in earth’s diurnal course With rocks and stones and trees.” To attain, and sustain, the relevant detachment from such an environment in order to savor it aesthetically is in itself a fair achievement, an achievement that suffuses the aesthetic experiences themselves with that sense of reconciliation. A cease-fire has been negotiated in our struggle with nature.

There is immense variety in the ways in which this can manifest itself in individual experience. The objects of nature may look to us as if their *raison d’être*

were precisely that we should celebrate their beauty. As Rilke put it: "Everything beckons to us to perceive it." Or, the dominant stance may be that of benediction: the Ancient Mariner "blesses" the watersnakes at his moment of reconciliation.

The fourth type of unity-ideal is notably different from our first three specimens. The first three quest after unity in the particular aesthetic perception itself: the attainment of complex unified synopses, the grasping of webs of affinities, and so on. The fourth, however, could arise in the contemplation of what is itself quite *un*-unified in the above senses, the night sky again, or a mass of hills with no detectable pattern to unite them. It is more strictly a concomitant, or a by-product of an aesthetic experience that we are already enjoying, an experience in which there may have been no synoptic grasping of patterns, relating of forms, or any other sort of unifying.

I suspect that someone who tried to construct a comprehensive aesthetic theory with "unity" as its sole key concept would obtain his comprehensiveness only by equivocating or punning over the meaning of the key expression, only by sliding and slithering from one of its many senses to another. When one sense is not applicable, another may well be. The fourth sense in particular can be relevant to vivid aesthetic experience of any natural object or collection of objects whatever.

So much the worse, we may conclude, for such a theory *qua* monolithic. But to say that is not to imply that our study has yielded only negative results. This is only one of several areas in aesthetics where we have to resist the temptation to work with a single supreme concept and must replace it by a *cluster* of related key concepts. Yet, in searching out the relevant key concepts, the displaced pseudo-concept may yet be a useful guide—as it is in the present case. We should be ill advised, however, to take this cluster of unity-concepts as by itself adequate for all explanatory purposes. Our analysis started with the stark contemplation of the uninterpreted, unrelated natural object in all its particularity and individual distinctness. This was not a mere starting-point, to be left behind in our pursuit of the "unities." On the contrary, aesthetic experience remains tethered to that concern with the particular, even if on a long rope. The rope is there, although the development and vitality of that experience demand that it be stretched to the full. The pull of the rope is felt, when the expanding and complicating of our synopses reaches the point beyond which we shall have not more but less fine discrimination of perceptual quality. It is felt again, when we risk the blurring and negating of natural forms as we really perceive them, in an anxious attempt to limit our experience of nature to the savoring of stereotyped and well-domesticated emotional qualities. It is even relevant to our fourth type of unity-ideal: for the sense of reconciliation is not an independent and autonomous aesthetic experience, but hangs entirely upon the occurrence of particular experiences of particular aesthetically interesting natural objects.

Up to this point my aim has been chiefly to describe some varieties of aesthetic experience of nature. From these we may make the following inferences: (i) Although some important features of art experience are unattainable in nature, that

by no means entitles the aesthetician to confine his studies to art; for even these points of apparent privation can yield types of aesthetic experience that are well worth analysis. (ii) Accounts of natural beauty that take “unity” as their central concept are often metaphysically extravagant, and are chronically unperceptive of ambiguities in their claims. Nevertheless, a cautious aesthetician would be unwise to let this extravagance deflect him from patiently teasing out the numerous and important strands of experience that originally prompted these accounts.

IV.

I turn now to a second main topic. Although recent aesthetics has been little concerned with natural beauty as such, in the course of its analysis of *art* experience, it has frequently made comparisons between our aesthetic approach to art objects and to objects in nature. It has made these comparisons at crucial points in argument, and in several different sorts of context. But what has not been asked—or adequately answered—is whether the comparing has been fairly done; whether, in particular, the account of nature experience, given or presupposed, is an adequate or a distorted account.

A substantial part of recent aesthetics has been the criticism of the expression theory of art. Right at the center of this criticism is the denial that we need concern ourselves with discovering the intention or the actual feelings or intuitions of the artist, when we try to appreciate or to appraise his artifact. The expression theory saw the artifact as the middle link in a communication from artist to spectator; the critics of the theory see the artifact first and foremost as an object with certain properties, properties that are, or should be, aesthetically interesting, worth contemplating, and that in their totality control and guide the spectator’s response. This change of emphasis chimes in well with the desire for a “scientific” criticism (the properties are *there* in the artifact, the object), and with the anti-psychologistic mood of current British and American philosophy (the work of art is not an “imaginary” one: and we are not probing behind it to its creator’s states of soul).

Clearly this is an aesthetic approach that reduces the gulf between art object and natural object. Both are to be approached primarily as individual, self-contained entities, exciting to contemplate by virtue of the objective properties they can be seen to possess.¹⁴ But, let us ask, how far can we accept this comparison? Critics of the critics have pointed out some deficiencies. They have insisted, for instance, upon the irreducible relevance of linguistic, social, and cultural context to the interpretation of a poem. The identical words might constitute *two* poems, not one, if we read them in two different contexts.¹⁵ We could extend this criticism as follows. Suppose we have two perceptually identical objects, one an artifact and the other natural. They might be a “carved stone” of Arp and a naturally smoothed stone; a carving in wood and a piece of fallen timber. Or they might be identical in pattern, though not in material; for example, a rock face with a particular texture and markings, and an abstract expressionist painting with the same texture and

the same markings. If we made the most of the *rapprochement*, we should have to say that we had in each of these cases essentially *one* aesthetic object. (Although numerically two, the pair would be no more aesthetically different from one another than two engravings from the same block.) Yet this would be a misleading conclusion. If we knew them for what they are—as artifact or natural object—we should certainly attend differently to them, and respond differently to them. As we look at the rock face in nature, we may realize imaginatively the geological pressures and turmoils that produced its pattern. The realizing of these need not be a piece of extra-aesthetic reflection: it may determine for us how we see and respond to the object itself. If we interpreted and responded to the abstract painting in the same way (assuming, of course, that it is a thoroughgoing abstract and not the representation of a rock face!), our interpretation would this time be merely whimsical, no more controlled or stabilized than a seeing of faces in the fire.¹⁶ If we arbitrarily restricted aesthetic experience both of nature and art to the contemplating of uninterpreted shapes and patterns, we could, of course, have the *rapprochement*. But we have seen good reason for refusing so to restrict it in the case of nature experience, whatever be the case with art.

Take another example. Through the eyepiece of a telescope I see the spiral nebula in Andromeda. I look next at an abstract painting in a circular frame that contains the identical visual pattern. My responses are not alike, even if each is indisputably aesthetic. My awareness that the first shapes are of enormous and remote masses of matter in motion imparts to my response a strangeness and solemnity that are not generated by the pattern alone. The abstract pattern may indeed impress by reminding me of various wheeling and swirling patterns in nature. But there is a difference between taking the pattern as that sort of reminder, and, on the other hand, brooding on this impressive instantiation of it in the nebula. Furthermore, a point already made about the emotive “background” to aesthetic experience is relevant here again. Where we confront what we know to be a human artifact—say a painting—we have no special shock of surprise at the mere discovery that there are patterns here which delight perception; we know that they have been put there, though certainly we may be astonished at their particular aesthetic excellences. With a natural object, however, such surprise can figure importantly in our overall response, a surprise that is probably the greater the more remote the object from our everyday environment.

A more lighthearted but helpful way of bringing out these points is to suppose ourselves confronted by a small object, which, for all we know, may be natural or may be an artifact. We are set the task of regarding it aesthetically. I suppose that we might cast upon it an uneasy and embarrassed eye. How shall we approach it? Shall we, for instance, see in its smoothness the slow mindless grinding of centuries of tides, or the swifter and mindful operations of the sculptor’s tools? Certainly, we can enjoy something of its purely formal qualities on either reckoning; but even the savoring of these is affected by non-formal factors that diverge according to the judgement we make about its origin.

To sum up this argument: On the rebound from a view of art as expression, as language, and the work of art as the medium of communication between artist and spectator, some recent aesthetics has been urging that the artifact is, first and foremost, an object among objects. The study of art is primarily the study of such objects, their observable qualities, their organization. This swing from intention to object has been healthful on the whole, delivering aesthetics and criticism from a great deal of misdirected labor. But it has countered the paradoxes of expressionism with paradoxes, or illuminating exaggerations, of its own. Differences between object and object need to be reaffirmed: indiscernibly different poems or carvings become discernibly different when we reckon with their aesthetically relevant cultural contexts; and the contextual controls that determine how we contemplate an object in nature are different from those that shape our experience of art. In other words, we have here a central current issue in aesthetics that cannot be properly tackled without a full-scale discussion of natural beauty.

V.

That, however, is not the only current issue about which the same can be said. It can be said also (and this introduces our final topic) about the analysis of such expressions as “true,” “false,” “profound,” “shallow,” “superficial,” as terms of aesthetic appraisal. These have been studied in their application to art objects, but scarcely at all in connection with nature.¹⁷ It might indeed be contested whether they have *any* meaningful use in the latter connection. I should readily admit that ordinary language can give very little help here; but I am equally sure that a use or uses can be *given* to these expressions in that context, and that such uses would be closely related to the more familiar uses in talk about art. But would this not constitute a merely arbitrary and pointless extension of a vocabulary useful only in art criticism? Not really: it would rather be to give comprehensiveness to a set of discriminations important throughout aesthetic experience, but which has tended, for various understandable reasons, to be worked out in detail only with respect to art.

Where then, in the aesthetic experience of nature, is there any room for talking of “truth,” “depth,” “triviality?” We can best approach an answer by way of some analysis of an expression that we have used once or twice already but not explained. It is a sense of the word “realize.” Here are some examples of the use. “I had long *known* that the earth was not flat, but I had never before *realized* its curvature till I watched that ship disappear on the horizon.” “I had seen from the map that this was a deserted moor, but not till I stood in the middle of it did I *realize* its desolation.” Here “realize” involves making, or becoming, vivid to perception, or to the imagination. If I suddenly realize the height of a cumulo-nimbus cloud I am not simply *taking note* of the height, but imagining myself climbing into the cloud in an airplane or falling through it, or I am superimposing upon it an image of a mountain of known vastness, or...or.... Auxiliary imagings may likewise attend my realizing of the earth’s curvature, the image of my arms

stretched out, fingers reaching round the sphere; and the realization of loneliness may involve imagining myself shouting but being unheard, needing help but getting none. In some senses, to realize something is simply to “know” or “understand,” where “know” and “understand” are analyzable in dispositional terms. But our present sense of “realize” has an essential episodic component: it is a coming-to-be-aware, a “clock-able” experience. In the aesthetic setting that interests us, it is an experience accompanying and arising out of perceptions—perceptions upon which we dwell and linger: I am gazing at the cumulo-nimbus cloud, when I realize its height. We do not discard, or pass beyond, the experience, as if we were judging the height of the cloud in flight navigation, or the loneliness of the moor in planning a murder. Realizing, in our sense, is not estimating or calculating. When I am told that the moon is a solid spherical body, 240,000 miles from the earth, I may go outside and look up at it and try, in the aesthetically relevant sense, to realize its solidity and its distance. Reference to perception can again be made obvious. We could not seriously ask ourselves “Am I, in fact, accurately realizing its distance at 240,000 miles, or am I mistakenly imagining it as 220,000?” Such discriminations cannot be made perceptually: they can only be calculated.

Though we have no room to multiply examples, it should be obvious that this sort of realizing is one of our chief activities in the aesthetic experiencing of nature. It has been central in earlier illustrations, the contemplation of the rock face, the spiral nebula, the ocean-smoothed stone.

But my suggestion that realizing is “episodic,” occurrent, may properly be challenged. Suppose that I am realizing the utter loneliness of the moor, when suddenly I discover that behind sundry bits of cover are a great many soldiers taking part in a field exercise. Could I, without illogic, maintain that I had been realizing what was not in fact the case? Hardly. “Realize” contains a built-in reference to truth. It may have episodic components, but it cannot be exhaustively analyzed in that way. I cannot be said to have realized the strength and hardness of a tall tree trunk, if, when I then approach it, it crumbles rotten at a touch. But surely I was doing *something*: my experience did occur; and nothing that subsequently occurs can alter it.

Now, this experience was, of course, the aesthetic contemplation of apparent properties. That they turn out not to be also actual properties may disturb the spectator, or it may not. For some people aesthetic experience is interested not at all in actuality—only in looks, seemings: indifference to truth may be part of their definition of the aesthetic. If the soldiers appear or the tree crumbles, the aesthetic value of the prior experiences is (to those people) not in the least affected.

But it is possible to take a rather different view. One could agree that a large range of aesthetic experience is not concerned about truth; but yet attach a peculiar importance to the range that is. I am not sure that the gulf between this and the contrasted view is wholly bridgeable by argument; but some reflections can be offered along the following lines.

If we want our aesthetic experiences to be repeatable and to have stability, we

shall try to ensure that new information or subsequent experimentation will not reveal the “seemings” as illusions, will not make a mock, as it were, of our first experience. If I know that the tree is rotten, I shall not be able again to savor its seeming strength. I could, no doubt, savor its “deceptively strong appearance”; but that would be a quite different experience from the first, and one that accepted and integrated the truth about the tree’s actual rottenness.

Suppose the outline of our cumulo-nimbus cloud resembles that of a basket of washing, and we amuse ourselves in dwelling upon this resemblance. Suppose that on another occasion we dwell, not upon such freakish (or in Coleridge’s sense “fanciful”) aspects, but try instead to realize the inner turbulence of the cloud, the winds sweeping up within and around it, determining its structure and visible form. Should we not be ready to say that this latter experience was less superficial or contrived than the other, that it was truer to nature, and for that reason more worth having? Or, compare again the realizing of the pressures, thrustings and great age of the rock before us, with merely chuckling over the likeness of its markings to a funny face. If there can be a passage, in art, from easy beauty to difficult and more serious beauty, there can also be such passage in aesthetic contemplation of nature.

If there were not a strong *nisus* in that direction, how could we account for the sense of bewilderment people express over how to bring their aesthetic view of nature into accord with the discoveries of recent science? Because of these discoveries (as Sir Kenneth Clark puts it), “the snug, sensible nature which we can see with our own eyes has ceased to satisfy our imaginations.”¹⁸

If the aesthetic enjoyment of nature were no more than the contemplation of particular shapes and colors and movements, these discoveries could not possibly disturb it. But they do: they set the imagination a task in “realizing.”

An objector may still insist that reference to truth (whether in nature or art) is aesthetically irrelevant. To him the only relevant factors are the savoring of perceptual qualities and formal organization. Can anything be said in reply to his claim? The formalist might at least be reminded that a major element in his own enjoyment is the synoptic grasping of complexities. A particular color patch may be seen as part of an object, as modifying the color of adjacent patches, and as contributing to the total perceived pattern—all simultaneously. One could argue that reference to truth—the striving to “realize”—should be taken as adding one more level of complexity, a further challenge to our powers of synopsis, and that for the *exclusion* of it no good reason could be given.

But a more searching anxiety might be expressed, in these terms. Sometimes, indeed, such realizations may enhance an aesthetic experience, but may they not on other occasions destroy it? If, for example, you see the full moon rising behind the silhouetted branches of winter trees, you may judge that the scene is more beautiful if you think of the moon simply as a silvery flat disc at no great distance from the trees on the skyline. Why should you have your enjoyment spoiled by someone who tells you that you ought to be realizing the moon’s actual shape, size, and

distance? Why indeed? There may be cases where I have to choose between, on the one hand, an aesthetic experience available only if I inhibit my realizing, and on the other hand, a different aesthetic experience, available if I do some realizing. In our example, the first experience is of beauty (in the narrow sense), and we could not count on the alternative experience being also one of beauty, in the same sense. It might, of course, be still aesthetically exciting; that is, of beauty in the wider sense, the commoner sense in aesthetics. But, the objector might still press, there is no guaranteeing even this latter possibility for *all* cases where we attempt to realize the nature of the objects contemplated. And this is exactly the difficulty we feel with regard to the bearing of present-day science on our vision of the natural world. Sometimes our attempts at realizing fail altogether, as with some versions of cosmologies and cosmogonies; or if they do succeed, they may be aesthetically bleak and unrewarding. Compromises, the balancing of one aesthetic requirement against another, are frequent enough, and may well be inevitable. One may say in a particular case: "This is the nearest I can come to making imaginatively vivid what I know about that object. My realizing is still not quite adequate to my knowledge; but if I were to go any farther in that direction I should lose touch altogether with the sights, sounds, and movements of the visible world, seen from the human point of view. And that would impoverish, not enrich, my total aesthetic experience." What we should be feeling (need I say?) is the tug of that rope—the rope that tethers aesthetic experience to the perception of the particular object and its perceived individuality.

To be able to say anything more confident about this problem, one would need to hold a metaphysical and religious view of nature and science, which denied that the imaginative assimilating of scientific knowledge could ultimately lead to aesthetic impoverishment. Probably Christian theism is one such view; and Goethe's philosophy of nature seems to have been another. These possibilities we can only take note of in this essay, without being able to explore them.

VI.

We may recall at the same time, and in conclusion, that the "unitary" accounts of natural beauty have, historically, been closely allied with various sorts of pantheism and nature-mysticism. I have argued that there are, in fact, not one but several unity-ideals; that it is most unlikely that any single aesthetic experience can fully and simultaneously realize them all; and I believe that with certain of them the notion of full realization makes dubious sense. Nevertheless, it does not follow that the idea of their ever more intense and comprehensive realization is without value, nor that the link with nature-mystical experiences must be severed.¹⁹

Although I can only hazard this suggestion in the most tentative way, I suspect that no more materials are required than those with which we are already furnished, in order to render available certain limited varieties of mystical experience, and logically to map them. Those materials provide us, not with affirmations about

a transcendent being or realm but with a *focus imaginarius*, that can play a regulative and practical role in the aesthetic contemplation of nature. It sees that contemplation as grounded, first and last, in particular perceptions, but as reaching out so as to relate the forms of the objects perceived to the pervasive and basic forms of nature; relating it also to the observer's own stance and setting, as himself one item in nature—a nature with whose forces he feels in harmony through the very success of this contemplative activity itself.

But even if something of the intensity and momentousness of mystical experience can be reached along such lines, this would be—for all I have said or shall say—a mysticism without a God. And surely the absence of belief in transcendence would make this quite different from a mysticism that admits it and centers upon it. Different, indeed, in the quality of available experience and in expectations aroused both for the here-and-now and the here-after; but not so radically different as to make “mysticism” a misnomer for the former. Belief in a transcendent being means that, for the believer, the “focus” is not imaginary but actual—in God; and it is doubtless psychologically easier to work towards a goal one believes to be fully realizable than towards a focus one believes, or suspects, to be imaginary. Rather similarly, in ethics a student may exercise a check to his practical moral confidence, when he discovers that “oughts” cannot be grounded in “is’s.” Yet it is seldom that he indulges for this reason in a permanent moral sulk. Perhaps, if I am right, it is no more reasonable to indulge gratuitously in a nature-mystical sulk. But I begin to moralize: a sign that this paper has come to its proper end.

Notes

- 1 [Editors' Note: Ronald Hepburn's classic essay, “Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty,” was first published in 1966. Consequently, it indicates the state of research on the aesthetics of nature at that time. As this collection testifies, there has been considerable progress in the field since then, and much of that progress is a direct result of the insights contained in this essay. It is therefore appropriate that it be the initial selection in this volume.]
- 2 By “nature” I shall mean all objects that are not human artifacts. This will of course include living creatures. I can afford to ignore for the purposes of this study the many possible disputes over natural objects that have received a marked, though limited, transformation at human hands.
- 3 W. Elton, ed., *Aesthetics and Language* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1954); E. Vivas and M. Krieger, eds., *The Problems of Aesthetics* (New York: Rinehart, 1953). Compare also Harold Osborne, whose book, *The Theory of Beauty* (London: Routledge, 1952), likewise confines its investigation to art experience. Osborne defines beauty as the “characteristic and peculiar excellence of works of art.” M.C. Beardsley's *Aesthetics* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1958) is subtitled *Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*. The opening sentence of the book reads: “There would be no problems of aesthetics, in

the sense in which I propose to mark out this field of study, if no one ever talked about works of art.”

- 4 For Croce’s view, see his *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic* [1902] trans. D. Ainslie (London: Macmillan, 1922), Part I, Chapter 13.
- 5 I am thinking, for example, of the recent insistence that even the art object is primarily *object*, that it must not be approached simply as a clue to its creator’s states of mind.
- 6 B. Hepworth, *Carvings and Drawings* (London: Lund Humphries, 1952), Chapter 4.
- 7 Unrestricted generalizations in aesthetics are usually precarious in proportion to their attractiveness. I have taken care not to set out the above contrast between “framed” and “unframed” as a contrast between *all* art objects and *all* natural objects considered aesthetically; for not every art object has a frame, even in the extended sense I have used above. Works of architecture, for instance, are like natural objects, in that we can set no limits to the viewpoints from which they can properly be regarded, nor can we decree where the aesthetically relevant context of a building ends. A church or castle, seen from several miles away, may dominate, and determine how we see a whole landscape. The contrast between framed and frameless can none the less be made for very many types of aesthetic objects—far enough at least to justify the general points made in the text.
- 8 Pepita Haezrahi, *The Contemplative Activity* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1954), Chapter 2.
- 9 On this point see the following:
 - (a) Graham Hough’s *Image and Experience* (London: Duckworth, 1960), pp. 175–176, contains some suggestive reflections stemming from his discussion of Ruskin and Roger Fry: “By intense contemplation of...experiences of form and space we become conscious of the unity between ourselves and the natural world.” Also:

It is Ruskin’s special distinction to show...how the experience of the senses can lead directly to that unified apprehension of nature, and of ourselves as a part of nature, which can fairly constantly be recognized, under various mythological disguises, not only as that which gives value to aesthetic experience but also as one of the major consolations of philosophy.

(b) We have quoted Barbara Hepworth on the mutual involvement of the spectator and natural aesthetic object, the changes in the sense of one’s own being, according to one’s position in the landscape. She goes on, in the same autobiographical sketch, to call this a “transmutation of essential unity with land and seascape, which derives from all the sensibilities...”

(c) The nature-mystical interpretation of the experience of unity-with-nature is briefly stated by Evelyn Underhill in her *Mysticism* (London: Methuen, 1912), p. 87: In moments of intense love for the natural world, “hints of a marvellous truth, a unity whose note is ineffable peace, shine in created things.”

W.T. Stace, in *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1960), pp. 78, 81, while listing the common characteristics of “extrovertive mysticism” (to which

nature-mysticism belongs), includes the following: "The One is ... perceived through the physical senses, in or through the multiplicity of objects." Also: "The One is apprehended more concretely as being an inner subjectivity in all things, described variously as life, or consciousness, or a living Presence." He adds: "There are underground connections between the mystical and the aesthetic ... which are at present obscure and unexplained."

(d) On Coleridge, see B. Willey *Nineteenth Century Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949), Chapter 1, generally, and especially Sections III and IV. In *The Friend*, Bohn edition, p. 366; quoted in Willey, pp. 29 f., Coleridge wrote:

The groundwork ... of all true philosophy is the full apprehension of the difference between the contemplation of reason, namely that intuition of things which arises when we possess ourselves as one with the whole...and that which presents itself when...we think of ourselves as separated beings, and place nature in antithesis to the mind, as object to subject, thing to thought, death to life.

Coleridge's statement has, of course, a much wider application than the topic of natural beauty; but he certainly applied it there.

(e) See also Wordsworth, *The Prelude* [1805], Book. VI, lines 624-640, and *Tintern Abbey* [1798], lines 88-102.

If this were primarily a historical study, we should have had to trace systematically the development of those conceptions (nature-mystical, Platonic, romantic, etc., etc.) that are behind the vocabulary of "unity with nature." What we are asking here, however, is how far these ideas could be of help to someone trying to make sense of natural aesthetic experience at the present time. Thus these brief quotations and references, culled from a fairly wide field, may suffice to show at least the existence of the tendencies with which we shall be chiefly concerned.

- 10 Compare A.C. Montefiore, "Review of *The Meaning and Purpose of Art*," *Mind* 68 (1959): 563-564.
- 11 S.T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (London: Fenner, 1817), Volume II.
- 12 G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Berlin Aesthetics Lectures* [1820s], trans. T.M. Knox, ed. C. Karelis (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 31.
- 13 On such analogies and affinities among natural forms, see G. Kepes, *The New Landscape in Art and Science* (Chicago: Theobald, 1956).
- 14 This account is highly general and schematic. I have said nothing about the basic differences among the arts themselves, which make the "aesthetic object" in (say) music so unlike that in literature or that again in architecture. My account as it stands is most immediately relevant to the visual arts, especially sculpture; but what is said about overall trends and emphases has extension beyond those.
- 15 H.S. Eveling argues that we should have a clash of competing criteria in such a situation. We should want to say "same words, same poem": but, knowing how differently we shall interpret the words according to the context in which we read them, we also want to say, "one set of words but two poems." See H.S. Eveling, "Composition and Criticism," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 59 (1959): 213-32.
- 16 It is a weakness of some abstract painting that it sacrifices almost all the devices by

which the spectator's response can be controlled and given determinateness. In the case of natural objects one is free to rely upon "controls" external to the object—as in the present example. But even if the artist makes his artifacts very like natural objects, our knowledge that they are in fact artificial and "framed" prevents us relying, in their case, upon such external controls.

- 17 On art, see J. Hospers, *Meaning and Truth in the Arts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946).
- 18 Sir Kenneth Clark, *Landscape into Art* (London: Murray, 1949), p. 150. Clark writes of art and artist, but his points are no less relevant to a contemplation of nature that never passes into the construction of art objects.
- 19 See Hough, p. 174 *seq.*

Appreciation and the Natural Environment

Allen Carlson



I.

With works of art there is a straightforward sense in which we know both what and how to aesthetically appreciate. We know *what* to appreciate in that, first, we can distinguish a work and its parts from that which is not it nor a part of it. And, second, we can distinguish its aesthetically relevant aspects from its aspects without such relevance. We know that we are to appreciate the sound of the piano in the concert hall and not the coughing that interrupts it; we know that we are to appreciate that a painting is graceful, but not that it happens to hang in the Louvre. In a similar vein, we know *how* to appreciate in that we know what “acts of aspection” to perform concerning different works. Philosopher Paul Ziff says:

... to contemplate a painting is to perform one act of aspection; to scan it is to perform another; to study, observe, survey, inspect, examine, scrutinise, etc., are still other acts of aspection.... I survey a Tintoretto, while I scan an H. Bosch. Thus I step back to look at the Tintoretto, up to look at the Bosch. Different actions are involved. Do you drink brandy in the way you drink beer?¹

It is clear that we have such knowledge of what and how to aesthetically appreciate. Also clear, I believe, are the grounds for this knowledge. Works of art are our own creations; it is for this reason that we know what is and what is not a part of a work, which of its aspects are of aesthetic significance, and how to appreciate them. We have made them for the purpose of aesthetic appreciation; in order for them to fulfil this purpose this knowledge must be available. In making an object we know what we make and thus its parts and its purpose. Hence in knowing what we make, we know what to do with what we make. In the more general cases the point is clear enough. In creating a painting, we know that what we make is a painting. In knowing this we know that it ends at its frame, that its colors are aesthetically important, but that where it hangs is not, and that we are to look at it rather than, say, listen to it. All this is involved in what it is to be a painting. Moreover, this point holds for more particular cases as well. Works of different types have different kinds of boundaries, have different foci of aesthetic significance, and, perhaps most important, demand different acts of aspection. In knowing the correct classification we know what and how to appreciate. Ziff again:

Generally speaking, a different act of aspection is performed in connection with works belonging to different schools of art, which is why the classification of style is of the essence. Venetian paintings lend themselves to an act of aspection involving attention to balanced masses: contours are of no importance, for they are scarcely to be found. The Florentine school demands attention to contours, the linear style predominates. Look for light in a Claude, for color in a Bonnard, for contoured volume in a Signorelli.²

I take the above to be beyond serious dispute, except as to the details of the complete account. If it were not the case, our complementary institutions of art and of the aesthetic appreciation of art would not be as they are. We would not have the artworld that we have. However, the subject of this essay is neither art nor the artworld. Rather it is the aesthetic appreciation of nature. The issue I investigate is the questions of what and how to aesthetically appreciate concerning the natural environment. The issue is of interest since the account that is suggested by the above remarks and that I believe to be correct for art cannot be applied to the natural environment without at least some modification. Thus initially the questions of what and how to aesthetically appreciate concerning nature appear to be open questions.

II.

In this section I consider some paradigms of aesthetic appreciation that *prima facie* seem applicable as models for the appreciation of the natural environment. In considering them I follow tradition in that these paradigms have often been offered as, or assumed to be, appropriate models for the appreciation of nature. However, I think that these models are not as promising as they initially appear to be.

The first paradigm I call the object model. In the artworld non-representational sculpture best fits this model of appreciation. When we appreciate such sculpture we appreciate it as the actual physical object that it is. The qualities to be aesthetically appreciated are the sensuous and design qualities of the actual object and perhaps certain abstract expressive qualities. The sculpture need not represent anything external to itself; it need not lead the appreciator beyond itself; it can be a self-contained aesthetic unit. Consider a sculpture by Constantin Brancusi, for example, the famous *Bird in Space* (1919). It has no particular representational connections with the rest of reality and no relational connections with its immediate surroundings and yet it has significant aesthetic qualities. It glistens, has balance and grace, and expresses flight itself.

Clearly it is possible to aesthetically appreciate an object of nature in the way indicated by this model. For example, we can appreciate a rock or a piece of driftwood in the same way that we appreciate the Brancusi sculpture: we actually or contemplatively remove the object from its surroundings and dwell on its sensuous and design qualities and its possible expressive qualities. Moreover, there are

considerations that support the plausibility of this model for appreciation of the natural environment. First, natural objects are in fact often appreciated in precisely this way: mantelpieces are littered with pieces of rock and driftwood. Second, the model fits well with one significant feature of natural objects: such objects, like the Brancusi sculpture, do not have explicit representational ties to the rest of reality. Third and most important, the model involves an accepted, traditional aesthetic approach. As philosopher Francis Sparshott notes: "When one talks of the aesthetic this or that, one is usually thinking of it as entering into a subject/object relation."³

In spite of these considerations, I think there are aspects of the object model that make it inappropriate for nature. George Santayana, in discussing the aesthetic appreciation of nature, which he identifies with the love of nature, notes that certain problems arise for such appreciation because the natural landscape has "indeterminate form." He then observes that although the landscape contains many objects that have determinate forms, "if the attention is directed specifically to them, we have no longer what, by a curious limitation of the word, is called the love of nature."⁴ I think this limitation is not as curious as Santayana suggests. The limitation marks the distinction between appreciating nature and appreciating the objects of nature. The importance of this distinction is underscored by the difficulty of appreciating nature by means of the object model. For example, on one understanding of this model, the objects of nature when so appreciated become "readymades" or "found art." The artworld grants what philosopher Arthur Danto calls "artistic enfranchisement" to a piece of driftwood just as it has to Marcel Duchamp's famous urinal, which was enfranchised as a work of art called *Fountain* (1917).⁵ When this magic is successful, the result is art. Questions of what and how to aesthetically appreciate are answered, but concerning art rather than nature; the appreciation of nature is lost in the shuffle. Appreciating sculpture that was once driftwood is no closer to appreciating nature than is appreciating a totem pole that was once a tree or a purse that was once a sow's ear. In such cases the conversion from nature to art is complete; only the means of conversion are different.

There is, however, another understanding of how the object model applies to the objects of nature. On this understanding natural objects are simply (actually or contemplatively) removed from their surroundings, but they do not become art, they remain natural objects. Here we do not appreciate such objects *qua* art objects, but rather *qua* natural objects. We do not consider the rock on our mantel a readymade sculpture; we consider it only an aesthetically pleasing rock. In such cases, as the example of non-representational sculpture suggests, our appreciation is limited to the sensuous and design qualities of natural objects and perhaps a few abstract expressive qualities: our rock has a wonderfully smooth and gracefully curved surface and expresses solidity.

The above suggests that, even when it does not make natural objects into works of art, the object model imposes certain limitations on our appreciation of such objects. The limitations are the result of the removal of the objects from their sur-

roundings, which the object model requires in order to begin providing answers to the questions of what and how to appreciate. But in requiring such a removal the object model becomes problematic. The model is most appropriate for those art objects that are self-contained aesthetic units. These objects are such that neither their environments of creation nor their environments of display are aesthetically relevant: the removal of self-contained art objects from their environments of creation does not vary their aesthetic qualities and their environments of display should not affect their aesthetic qualities. However, natural objects possess what might be called organic unity with their environments of creation: such objects are a part of, and have developed out of, the elements of their environments by means of the forces at work within those environments. Thus their environments of creation are aesthetically relevant to natural objects. And for this reason their environments of display are equally relevant just in virtue of the fact that these environments will be either the same as, or different from, their environments of creation. In either case the aesthetic qualities of natural objects will be affected. Consider our rock: on the mantel it may seem wonderfully smooth, gracefully curved, and expressive of solidity, but in its environment of creation it will have more and different aesthetic qualities—qualities that are the product of the relationships between it and its environment. Here it is expressive of the particular forces that shaped and continue to shape it and displays for aesthetic appreciation its place in and its relationships to its environment. Moreover, depending upon its place in that environment it may not express many of those qualities, for example, solidity, that it appears to express when on the mantel.

I conclude that the object model, even without changing nature into art, faces a problem as a paradigm for the aesthetic appreciation of nature. The problem is a dilemma: either we actually or contemplatively remove the object from its environment or we leave it where it is. If the object is removed, the model applies to the object and suggests answers to the questions of what and how to appreciate. But the result is the appreciation of a comparatively limited set of aesthetic qualities. On the other hand, if the object is not removed, the model seemingly does not constitute an adequate model for a very large part of the appreciation that is possible. Thus it makes little headway with the what and how questions. In either case the object model does not provide a successful paradigm for the aesthetic appreciation of nature. It appears after all not a very “curious limitation” that when our attention is directed only toward particular objects in the environment, it is not called, as Santayana puts it, the love of nature.

A second artistic paradigm for the aesthetic appreciation of nature I call the landscape or scenery model. In the artworld this model of appreciation is illustrated by landscape painting; in fact the model probably owes its existence to this art form. In one of its favored senses “landscape” indicates a prospect—usually a grand prospect—seen from a specific standpoint and distance; a landscape painting is frequently a representation of such a prospect.⁶ When aesthetically appreciating a landscape painting, the main appreciative emphasis is not on the actual

object, the painting, nor on the object represented, the actual prospect; rather it is on the representation of the object and its represented features. Thus in landscape painting the appreciative emphasis is on those qualities that play an essential role in representing a prospect: visual qualities related to line, color, and overall design. These are the qualities that are traditionally significant in landscape painting and that are the focus of the landscape model of appreciation. It is thus a model of appreciation that encourages perceiving and appreciating nature as if it were a landscape painting, as a representation of a prospect seen from a specific standpoint and distance. It centers attention on aesthetic qualities of line, color, and design—qualities that are seen, and best seen, at a distance.

It is evident that the landscape model has been historically significant in our aesthetic appreciation of nature.⁷ The model is the direct descendent of the idea of the “picturesque,” which literally means “picture-like” and indicates a mode of appreciation by which the natural world is divided into scenes, each aiming at an ideal dictated by art. This concept guided the aesthetic appreciation of eighteenth century tourists as they pursued picturesque scenery with the help of the “Claude-glass.” Named after landscape artist Claude Lorrain, this small, tinted, convex mirror helped tourists see the landscape as they would art. Thomas West’s popular guidebook to the Lake District (first published in 1778) says of the glass:

where the objects are great and near, it removes them to a due distance, and shews them in the soft colours of nature, and most regular perspective the eye can perceive, art teach, or science demonstrate ...; to the glass is reserved the finished picture, in highest colouring, and just perspectives.⁸

In a somewhat similar fashion, modern tourists reveal their preferences for the landscape model of appreciation by frequenting “scenic viewpoints” where the actual space between tourists and the prescribed “view” often constitutes “a due distance” that aids the impression of “soft colours of nature, and the most regular perspective the eye can perceive, art teach, or science demonstrate.” And the “regularity” of the perspective is often enhanced by the positioning of the viewpoint itself. Moreover, modern tourists also desire “the finished picture, in highest colouring, and just perspective”; whether this be the “scene” framed and balanced in a camera’s viewfinder, the result of this in the form of a color print, or the “artistically” composed postcard and calendar reproductions of the “scene,” which often attract more appreciation than that which they “reproduce.” Geographer Ronald Rees describes the situation as follows:

...the taste has been for a view, for scenery, not for landscape in the original Dutch—and present geographical—meaning of term, which denotes our ordinary, everyday surroundings. The average modern sightseer, unlike many of the Romantic poets and painters who were accomplished naturalists, is interested not in natural forms and processes, but in a prospect.⁹

It is clear that in addition to being historically important, the landscape model, like the object model, gives at least initial guidelines as to what and how to appreciate in nature. We are to appreciate the natural environment as if it were a landscape painting. The model requires dividing the environment into scenes or blocks of scenery, each of which is to be viewed from a particular point by a viewer separated by the appropriate spatial (and emotional?) distance. A drive through the country is not unlike a walk through a gallery of landscape paintings. When seen in this light, this model of appreciation causes a certain uneasiness in a number of thinkers. Some, such as ecologist Paul Shepard, seemingly believe this kind of appreciation of the natural environment is so misguided that they entertain doubts about the wisdom of any aesthetic approach to nature.¹⁰ Others find the model to be ethically and environmentally suspect. For example, after pointing out that the modern tourist is interested only in a prospect, Rees concludes:

In this respect the Romantic Movement was a mixed blessing. In certain phases of its development it stimulated the movement for the protection of nature, but in its picturesque phase it simply confirmed our anthropocentrism by suggesting that nature exists to please as well as to serve us. Our ethics, if the word can be used to describe our attitudes and behaviour toward the environment, have lagged behind our aesthetics. It is an unfortunate lapse which allows us to abuse our local environments and venerate the Alps and the Rockies.¹¹

What has not been as generally noted, however, is that this model of appreciation is suspect not only on ethical and environmental grounds, but also on aesthetic grounds. The model requires us to view the natural environment as if it were a static representation that is essentially "two dimensional." It requires the reduction of the environment to a scene or view. But what must be kept in mind is that nature is not a scene, not a representation, not static, and not two dimensional. The point is that the model requires the appreciation of the natural environment not as what it is and with the qualities it has, but rather as something that it is not and with qualities it does not have. The model is in fact inappropriate to the actual nature of the object of appreciation. Consequently it not only, as the object model, unduly limits our aesthetic appreciation—in this case to visual qualities of line, color, and design—it also misleads it. Philosopher Ronald Hepburn puts the point in general terms:

Supposing that a person's aesthetic education ... instills in him the attitudes, the tactics of approach, the expectations proper to the appreciation of art-works only...such a person will either pay very little aesthetic heed to natural objects, or else will heed them in the wrong way. He will look—and of course look in vain—for what can be found and enjoyed only in art.¹²

III.

I conclude that artistic approaches, such as the landscape model and the object model, are inadequate as paradigms for the aesthetic appreciation of nature. However, the reason for their inadequacy is instructive. Both the landscape and the object models are inadequate because they are inappropriate given the nature of the natural environment. Perhaps, to see what and how to appreciate concerning the natural environment, we must consider the nature of that environment more carefully. In this regard there are two rather obvious points that I wish to emphasize. The first is that the natural environment is an environment; the second is that it is natural.

When we conceptualize the natural environment as “nature,” I think we are tempted to think of it as an object. When we conceptualize it as “landscape,” we are certainly led to thinking of it as scenery. Consequently perhaps the concept of the “natural environment” is somewhat preferable. At least it makes explicit that it is an environment that is under consideration. The object model and the landscape model each in its own way fails to take this into account. But what is involved in taking this into account? Here I initially follow some remarks made by Sparshott. He suggests that to consider something environmentally is primarily to consider it in regard to the relation of “self to setting,” rather than “subject to object” or “traveler to scene.”¹³ An environment is the setting in which we exist as a “sentient part”; it is our surroundings. Sparshott points out that as our surroundings—our setting—the environment is something that we take for granted, something that we hardly notice: it is necessarily unobtrusive. If any one part of it becomes obtrusive, it is in danger of being seen as an object or a scene, not as our environment. As Sparshott says: “When a man starts talking about ‘environmental values’ we usually take him to be talking about aesthetic values of a background sort.”¹⁴

Thinking of the aesthetic values of the environment as primarily background values has obvious ramifications for the questions of what and how to appreciate. Concerning the question of what to appreciate this suggests the answer “everything,” for in an essentially unobtrusive setting there seems little basis for including and excluding. I return to this point shortly. Concerning the question of how to appreciate, the answer suggested is in terms of all those ways in which we normally are aware of and experience our surroundings. Sparshott notes that “if environmental aspects are background aspects, eye and ear lose part of their privilege” and goes on to mention smell, touch, and taste, and even warmth and coolness, barometric pressure, and humidity as possibly relevant.¹⁵ This points in the right direction, but, as Sparshott also notes, it seems to involve a difficulty: that “the concept of the aesthetic tugs in a different direction”—the direction of the subject/object relation involving primarily the visual scrutiny of an aesthetic object.¹⁶

However, I do not think this difficulty need be as serious as Sparshott seems to think it is. I suspect the apparent tension is not due to the concept of the aesthetic

being *necessarily* tied to the subject/object relation or to the visual, but rather is due to its being antithetical to the appreciation of anything only as unobtrusive background. To confirm this we need to consider the concept of the aesthetic elaborated by John Dewey in *Art as Experience*.¹⁷ Dewey's concept is such that anything that is aesthetically appreciated must be obtrusive, must be foreground, but it need not be an object and it need not be seen (or only seen). To assume that that which is aesthetically appreciated need be an object or only seen is to confine aesthetic appreciation to either the object model or the landscape model, which, as we have noted, impose unacceptable limitations on the aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment.

I suggest, therefore, that the beginning of an answer to the question of how to aesthetically appreciate an environment is something like the following. We must experience our background setting in all those ways in which we normally experience it, by sight, smell, touch, and whatever. However, we must experience it not as unobtrusive background, but as obtrusive foreground. What is involved in such an "act of aspection" is not completely clear. Dewey gives us an idea in remarks such as:

To grasp the sources of esthetic experience it is ... necessary to have recourse to animal life below the human scale.... The live animal is fully present, all there, in all of its actions: in its wary glances, its sharp sniffing, its abrupt cocking of ears. All senses are equally on the *qui vive*.¹⁸

And perhaps the following description by geographer Yi-Fu Tuan gives some further indication:

An adult must learn to be yielding and careless like a child if he were to enjoy nature polymorphously. He needs to slip into old clothes so that he could feel free to stretch out on the hay beside the brook and bathe in a meld of physical sensations: the smell of the hay and of horse dung; the warmth of the ground, its hard and soft contours; the warmth of the sun tempered by breeze; the tickling of an ant making its way up the calf of his leg; the play of shifting leaf shadows on his face; the sound of water over the pebbles and boulders, the sound of cicadas and distant traffic. Such an environment might break all the formal rules of euphony and aesthetics, substituting confusion for order, and yet be wholly satisfying.¹⁹

Tuan's account of how to appreciate the natural environment fits well with our earlier answer to the question of what to appreciate: that is, everything. This answer, of course, will not do. We cannot appreciate everything; there must be limits and emphases in our aesthetic appreciation of nature as there are in our appreciation of art. Without such limits and emphases our experience of the natural environment would be only "a meld of physical sensations" without any meaning or significance.

It would be what William James calls a “blooming, buzzing confusion,” which truly substitutes “confusion for order” and, I suspect, contra to Tuan, would not be wholly satisfying.²⁰ Such experience would be too far removed from our aesthetic appreciation of art to merit the label “aesthetic” or even the label “appreciation.” Consider again the case of art. As noted in Section I, the boundaries and foci of aesthetic significance in works of art are a function of the type of art in question: for example, paintings end at their frames and their colors are significant. Moreover, we noted that our knowledge of such matters is due to works of art being our creations. But here it is relevant to note the second point I wish to emphasize about natural environments: they are natural. Nature is not art. As such it has no boundaries or foci of aesthetic significance that are given as a result of our creation nor of which we have knowledge due to our involvement in such creation.

The fact that nature is natural—not our creation—does not mean, however, that we must be without knowledge of it. Natural environments are such that we can discover things about them that are independent of any involvement by us in their creation. Thus, although we have not created nature, we yet know a great deal about it. This knowledge, essentially common sense/scientific knowledge, seems the only viable candidate for playing the role concerning the appreciation of nature that our knowledge of types of art, artistic traditions and the like plays concerning the appreciation of art. Consider the aesthetic appreciation of an environment such as that described by Tuan. We experience the environment as obtrusive foreground; the smell of the hay and of the horse dung, the feel of the ant, the sound of the cicadas and of the distant traffic, all force themselves upon us. We experience a “meld of sensations” but, as noted, if our state is to be aesthetic appreciation rather than just the having of raw experience, the meld cannot be simply a “blooming, buzzing confusion.” Rather it must be what Dewey calls a consummatory experience: one in which knowledge and intelligence transform raw experience by making it determinate, harmonious, and meaningful. For example, in order for there to be aesthetic appreciation of Tuan’s environment, we must recognize the smell of the hay and that of the horse dung and perhaps distinguish between them; we must feel the ant at least as an insect rather than as, say, a twitch. Such recognizing and distinguishing results in certain aspects of the obtrusive foreground becoming foci of aesthetic significance. Moreover, they are natural foci appropriate to the particular natural environment we are appreciating. Likewise our knowledge of the environment may yield certain appropriate boundaries or limits to the experience. For example, since we are aesthetically appreciating a certain kind of environment, the sound of cicadas may be appreciated as a proper part of the setting, while the sound of the distant traffic might be excluded, much as we ignore the coughing in the concert hall.

What I am suggesting is that the question of what to aesthetically appreciate in the natural environment is to be answered in a way analogous to the similar question about art. The difference is that in the case of the natural environment the relevant knowledge is the common sense/scientific knowledge that we have discov-

ered about the environment in question. This knowledge gives us the appropriate foci of aesthetic significance and the appropriate boundaries of the setting so that our experience becomes one of aesthetic appreciation. If to aesthetically appreciate art we must have knowledge of artistic traditions and styles within those traditions, then to aesthetically appreciate nature we must have knowledge of the different environments of nature and of the systems and elements within those environments. In the way in which the art critic and the art historian are well equipped to aesthetically appreciate art, the naturalist and the ecologist are well equipped to aesthetically appreciate nature.²¹

This point about what to appreciate in nature also has ramifications for how to appreciate nature. Above I suggest that Tuan's description seems to indicate a general act of aspection appropriate for a natural environment. However, since natural environments differ in type it seems that within this general act of aspection there are differences that should be noted. To aesthetically appreciate an environment we experience our surroundings as obtrusive foreground allowing our knowledge of that environment to select certain foci of aesthetic significance and perhaps exclude others, thereby limiting the experience. However, there are also different kinds of appropriate acts of aspection that can likewise be indicated by our knowledge of environments. Ziff tells us to look for contours in the Florentine school and for color in a Bonnard, to survey a Tintoretto and to scan a Bosch. Consider different natural environments. It seems we must survey a prairie environment, looking at the subtle contours of the land, feeling the wind blowing across the open space, and smelling the mix of prairie grasses and flowers. But such an act of aspection has little place in a dense forest environment. There we must examine and scrutinize, inspecting the detail of the forest floor, listening carefully for the sounds of birds, and smelling carefully for the scent of spruce and pine. Likewise, the description of environmental appreciation given by Tuan, in addition to being a model for environmental acts of aspection in general, is also a description of the act of aspection appropriate for a particular kind of environment—one perhaps best classifiable as pastoral. Different natural environments require different acts of aspection; and as in the case of what to appreciate, our knowledge of the environment in question indicates how to appreciate, that is, indicates the appropriate act or acts of aspection.

The model I therefore suggest for the aesthetic appreciation of nature is what might be termed the natural environmental model. It involves recognizing that nature is an environment and thus a setting within which we exist and that we normally experience with our complete range of senses as our unobtrusive background. But for our experience to be aesthetic, this unobtrusive background must be experienced as obtrusive foreground. The result is the experience of a "blossoming, buzzing confusion," which in order to be appreciated must be tempered by the common sense and scientific knowledge that we have discovered about the natural environment so experienced. Our knowledge of the nature of a particular environment yields the appropriate boundaries of appreciation, the particular foci of

aesthetic significance, and the relevant act or acts of aspection. We thus have a model that begins to answer to the questions of what and how to appreciate concerning the natural environment and that seems to do so with due regard for the nature of that environment. And this is important not only for aesthetic, but also for moral, environmental, and ecological reasons.

IV.

In this essay, I attempt to open discussion on the questions of what and how to aesthetically appreciate concerning nature. In doing so, I have argued that two traditional approaches, each of which more or less assimilates the appreciation of nature to the appreciation of certain art forms, leave much to be desired. However, the approach I suggest, the natural environmental model, yet follows closely the general structure of our aesthetic appreciation of art. This approach does not depend on an assimilation of natural objects to art objects nor of natural environments to scenery, but rather on an application of the general structure of the aesthetic appreciation of art to something that is not art. What is important is to recognize that nature is an environment and is natural and to make that recognition central to our aesthetic appreciation. Thereby we will aesthetically appreciate nature for what it is and for the qualities it has. And we will avoid being the person described by Hepburn, who “will either pay very little aesthetic heed to natural objects or else will heed them in the wrong way,” who “will look—and of course look in vain—for what can be found and enjoyed only in art.”²²

Notes

- 1 Paul Ziff, “Reasons in Art Criticism,” *Philosophical Turnings, Essays in Conceptual Appreciation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966) p. 71.
- 2 Ibid. Ziff is concerned with the way in which knowledge of classification yields different acts of aspection. For an elaboration of this point and its ramifications concerning what is and is not aesthetically significant in a work of art, see Kendall Walton, “Categories of Art,” *The Philosophical Review* 79 (1970): 334-367. How our knowledge of art and the artworld yields the boundaries between art and the rest of reality is interestingly discussed in Arthur Danto, “The Artistic Enfranchisement of Real Objects, the Artworld,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 61 (1964): 571-584.
- 3 F.E. Sparshott, “Figuring the Ground: Notes on Some Theoretical Problems of the Aesthetic Environment,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 6 (1972): 13.
- 4 George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty* [1896] (New York: Collier, 1961), p. 100.
- 5 Danto, “Artistic Enfranchisement,” p. 579. On issues about turning objects into art, see the institutional theory of art; the classic account of which is George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).
- 6 This favored sense of “landscape” is brought out by Yi-Fu Tuan. See *Topophilia: A*

Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1974), pp. 132-133, or "Man and Nature: An Eclectic Reading," *Landscape* 15 (1966): 30.

- 7 For a good brief discussion of this point, see Ronald Rees, "The Scenery Cult, Changing Landscape Tastes over Three Centuries," *Landscape* 19 (1975). Note the following remarks by E.H. Gombrich in "The Renaissance Theory of Art and the Rise of Landscape," *Norm and Form: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1971), pp. 117-118: "... I believe that the idea of natural beauty as an inspiration of art ... is, to say the least, a very dangerous oversimplification. Perhaps it even reverses the actual process by which man discovers the beauty of nature. We call a scenery 'picturesque' ... if it reminds us of paintings we have seen.... Similarly, so it seems, the discovery of Alpine scenery does not precede but follows the spread of prints and paintings with mountain panoramas."
- 8 Thomas West, *Guide to the Lakes* [1778], quoted in J.T. Ogden, "From Spatial to Aesthetic Distance in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35 (1974): 66-67.
- 9 Ronald Rees, "The Taste for Mountain Scenery," *History Today* 25 (1975), p. 312.
- 10 Paul Shepard, *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game* (New York: Scribner, 1973), pp. 147-148. Shepard made this position more explicit at a lecture at Athabasca University, Edmonton, Alberta, November 16, 1974.
- 11 Rees, "Mountain Scenery," p. 312. I consider ethical and environmental, as well as aesthetic, problems with this approach to appreciating nature in "Formal Qualities in the Natural Environment," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 13 (1979): 99-114 and "On the Possibility of Quantifying Scenic Beauty," *Landscape Planning* 4 (1977): 131-172. Ethical worries are also expressed by Tuan, *Topophilia*, Chapter 8, and R.A. Smith and C.M. Smith, "Aesthetics and Environmental Education," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 4 (1970): 131-132. Smith and Smith put the point as follows: "Perhaps there is a special form of arrogance in experiencing nature strictly in the categories of art, for the attitude involved here implies an acceptance, though perhaps only momentarily, of the notion that natural elements have been arranged for the sake of the man's aesthetic pleasure. It is possible that this is what Kant had in mind when he said that in the appreciation of natural beauty one ought not assume that nature has fashioned its forms for our delight and that, instead, 'it is we who receive nature with favor, and not nature that does us a favor.'"
- 12 R.W. Hepburn, "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty," in *British Analytical Philosophy*, ed. Bernard Williams and Alan Montefiore (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 293 [this volume, p. 48]. For a condensed version of this essay, see Hepburn's "Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," in *Aesthetics and the Modern World*, ed. H. Osborne (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968). Hepburn argues that our aesthetic appreciation of nature is enhanced by our "realizing" that an object is what it is and has the qualities it has. See pp. 303-307 [this volume, pp. 55-58].
- 13 Sparshott, "Figuring the Ground," pp. 12-13. Sparshott also considers other possible

relations not directly relevant here. Moreover, I suspect he considers the “traveler to scene” relation more central to appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature than I do.

14 Ibid., pp. 17-18.

15 Ibid., p. 21.

16 Ibid., pp. 13-14, p. 21.

17 John Dewey, *Art as Experience* [1934] (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1958), especially Chapter III, “Having an Experience,” pp. 35-57.

18 Ibid., pp. 18-19.

19 Tuan, *Topophilia*, p. 96.

20 William James, *The Principles of Psychology* [1890] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 462.

21 I have in mind here individuals such as John Muir and Aldo Leopold. See, for example, Muir's *Our National Parks* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916) and Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949).

22 Hepburn, “Neglect of Natural Beauty,” p. 293 [this volume, p. 48].

The Aesthetics of Art and Nature

Arnold Berleant



I.

The title of this essay masks a deliberate ambiguity, one that is, in fact, its central issue. Few would deny the possibility of obtaining aesthetic satisfaction from both works of art and from nature, customarily in the case of the first and under certain conditions in the other. But what *sort* of satisfaction is this, and is it the same kind in nature as in art?

The usual course, perhaps the most intuitively obvious, is to recognize that aesthetic value exists in both domains but, for historical and philosophical reasons, to find that the kind of appreciation each encourages is essentially different. Another possibility is to associate contemporary environmental art with seventeenth and eighteenth century gardens, then regarded as a high art, demonstrating a unity of art and nature in both, and implying that they share a common aesthetic.¹ A third choice, the converse of this, is to take environmental appreciation as the standard and to reinterpret the artistic aesthetic by the natural. The question hidden in my title, then, is whether there is one aesthetic or two, a single aesthetic that encompasses both art and nature, or one that is distinctively artistic and another that identifies the appreciation of natural beauty.

This is more than a question in the grammar of number, and it is, in my judgment, more than a minor issue in aesthetics. Rather, it provokes some of its central concerns: the nature of art, the identifying features of aesthetic appreciation, and the larger connections of the theory of appreciation with other philosophical issues. These last include matters that were once regarded as central but are now largely consigned to the margins, such as noumenal and transcendent experience, and occasions that seem to test the extent of the aesthetic response, such as extreme environmental conditions.² It may indeed be that the philosophy of nature is no peripheral matter, either aesthetically or, more generally, philosophically, and that ultimately it engages the very heart of philosophy. The intent of this essay is, in fact, to suggest this by moving toward a naturalizing of aesthetics, as it were, recognizing its association and continuity with other regions of experience, and toward identifying the aesthetic as a critical dimension of the value that binds together the many domains of the human world.

Such a large project requires specificity. What will occupy me here is the more

limited question of whether aesthetics harbors two dissimilar types of phenomena, one concerning art and another nature, or whether both actually involve a single all-embracing kind of experience that requires a comprehensive theory to accommodate it. It would be coy to plead uncertainty at this point in the discussion, for it is indeed my purpose to make a case for a general theory, without denying the diversity of individual experience and the divergent cultural factors in our encounters with both art and nature. A general aesthetic must acknowledge these differences, and its ability to do so is the test of its success. For it is precisely the failure of traditional aesthetics to accommodate the enlargement of the objects, activities, and occasions that have characterized much of the art of the past hundred years that has contributed to our present dilemma concerning nature and art.

The traditional view of aesthetic appreciation is that a special attitude is required, one of disinterested and contemplative attention to an object for its own sake. The watchword is, of course, “disinterested,” for Kant’s legacy in making it central in appreciation has shaped the course of aesthetics over the past two centuries. It is precisely by setting aside interest, “either of sense or of reason,” as Kant put it, that we become capable of receiving aesthetic satisfaction. Assuming a disinterested attitude thus frees us from the distractions of practical purposes and permits us to dwell freely on an object or a representation, which we can then regard as beautiful.

This definition of the boundaries of the aesthetic carries important implications. To aid in achieving disinterestedness, it is important to circumscribe art objects by clear borders, and the classical arts exhibit many features that seem designed to accomplish this: the frame of a painting, the pedestal for sculpture, the proscenium arch in theater, the stage for dance, music, and other performing arts. To some extent these were deliberate developments. Shaftesbury, who preceded Kant and actually provided much of the originality of conception to which Kant later gave philosophical order and structure, had argued that art must be enclosed within borders instead of spreading across walls, ceilings, and staircases, so that it may be grasped in a single view. It became important to isolate the object of beauty, singling it out for those special aesthetic qualities that succeeding generations of aestheticians have vainly attempted to define. This view led, too, to a focus on the internal attributes of the art object, such as its self-sufficiency, completeness, and unity. These traits came to identify the character and object of aesthetic appreciation, and they set the direction of aesthetic inquiry that has dominated discussion to the present.³

By circumscribing the domain of aesthetics, this formulation recognized a distinct aesthetic sensibility and encouraged a body of scholarship that came to constitute the new discipline of aesthetics. However, it also had some awkward consequences. One has to do with its difficulties in dealing with architecture. If we put enough distance between ourselves and a building, we may possibly comprehend it in a single view. But surely a building is more than an object seen from a distance. It is meant to be entered, to be moved through, to house activities of some

sort. We have seen how the only recourse for traditional aesthetics was to place these various roles in separate domains. Indeed, that has been the regular ploy of aesthetics when forced to defend the integrity of beauty against the incursions of utility: separate the various aspects of the object in order to keep art from being sullied by any association with practical activities or ends.

Compromise, then, permitted architecture to retain its place among the fine arts. But it was an uneasy compromise, for in practice it is impossible to maintain for long any real division between beauty and utility. Not only are form and function related, but the perception of space, surface, sound, and pattern can profoundly affect a building's practical success, influencing the movement, the efficiency, the very mood of its users. Nor can the performing arts retain their purity as contemplative objects by separating themselves physically from their surroundings. For despite the tactic of placing musical and dance performances in a separate space above the plane occupied by the audience, these arts possess the uncanny ability to insinuate themselves into our bodies, stirring up somatic and affective responses, and engaging us in ways that are difficult to reconcile with the contemplative ideal. It is even harder to distance oneself from literature, for here the art employs our very consciousness to lead us into its enchanted realm. In fact, it seems that we have a theory of the arts that is actually modeled on only one kind—the visual arts of painting and sculpture—and that has been extended to the others at the price of plausibility. And even in those supposedly visual arts its appropriateness can be questioned.⁴

Some serious problems encumber traditional aesthetics, then, in the domain of the fine arts. But what happens when this conception of art becomes the model for appreciating nature? Here even greater difficulties appear. Shaftesbury had wanted to deal with beauty in nature as contemplative and not as active, of practical use, owned, or involved with desires.⁵ And indeed some devices seem to turn environment into a contemplative object: the scenic outlook over a panoramic landscape, an allée viewed from a terrace, the formalism of a French garden.

Yet does aesthetic appreciation cease when we enter a path and move into the landscape or walk down the allée? Most gardens, even French ones, draw us into intimate views, encouraging us to make a reciprocal contribution through our movement and change of location and vantage. Moreover, the distancing that is so important a part of traditional appreciation is difficult to achieve when one is surrounded by the "object." As with earth art, we are on the same plane, in the same space as the blossom or tree we are regarding. In fact, what the Japanese stroll garden accomplishes by requiring our active cooperation in walking and positioning ourselves merely extends and amplifies factors present in all environmental experience.⁶ In order to safeguard aesthetic contemplation one may be forced, ironically, to abandon nature entirely in favor of its representation in art. It seems easier to contemplate a landscape painting than a landscape, for painting frames the scene, offering it as an object for disinterested regard. There are no annoying insects to distract one, no wind to ruffle one's hair, no precarious foot-

ing or dizzying heights. One can adopt a disinterested stance without danger or fear of disruption.

The inadequacies of traditional aesthetics for the appreciation of nature rest on still other grounds. Some commentators associate the enjoyment of art with the appreciation of the skill and originality that went into creating the art object. For them, art appreciation centers on our admiration of the creativity embodied in the design of a work. Since this is not present in nature, one must have recourse to something different. One may conclude that a separate aesthetic is needed, an aesthetic that bases our appreciative response on the awareness, selection, and understanding of the order by which natural forces have produced the objects we admire. The appreciation of order in nature, then, replaces the appreciation of design in art. Each provides the basis of a separate aesthetic, one for art and another for nature, and traditional aesthetics remains intact.⁷

The solution that there are different sorts of appreciation in art and nature remains indebted to the traditional aesthetics of Shaftesbury and Kant. For its central premise is that appreciation is directed toward an aesthetic object—a designed object in art, an ordered object in nature. And indeed this dual aesthetic is a reasonable consequence of that premise: such dissimilar objects seem to require different accounts of their creation and meaning.

It is more than coincidental that both the traditional theory and its dualistic compromise rest on the premise of objectification. Yet does this premise follow from the appreciative experience of art and nature, or is the perception rather dictated by the theory? A world of objects may seem easier to circumscribe and control, but this is not the world of lived experience.⁸ If we regard the painting of a landscape disinterestedly from a distance, we get a contemplative object, but what of the appreciation of an actual landscape? Here the problems with objectification are more troublesome. It is, as we have seen, far more difficult to objectify environment than art.

But does the objectification premise in fact survive in either case? For it is not nature alone that troubles conventional aesthetics. In fact, the applicability of traditional theory to painting lasted barely a century, although whether it ever really suitably accounted for aesthetic fulfillment is itself debatable.⁹ Yet since the Impressionists' dissolution of represented objects into atmosphere and of art objects into perceptual experiences, the visual arts have increasingly followed the nonconfining pattern of the other arts. The picture frame has come to function not so much as an enclosure than as a facilitator for focusing our gaze into the painting, and this internal focusing eludes the very objectification that the traditional aesthetic intended to ensure.

Such developments in painting make reference to the beholder, and the viewer's participation is required to complete the work. What the multiple planes of cubism do in fragmenting static objects, the intense energy of the futurists does in dissolving dynamic ones: both transform objects into experiences. Just as optical art forces an interplay between eye and painting, photorealism confronts the viewer

with giant images. Even sculpture, which would seem to preserve the separateness of the object by removing it to a higher spatial plane, has followed the same course, not just by emphasizing the dynamic forces of the work, as with Bourdelle, but by stressing the powers that emanate from the piece to energize the surrounding space and, like *Laocoön*, entrap the viewer. Yet this merely emphasizes the charmed space, the magical effusion of all good sculpture. More recent work has, of course, tended to dispense with the pedestal entirely and lead the viewer into physical interplay, as with Calder's stabiles and di Suvero's ride 'em pieces. And earthworks and environmental art extend far beyond the restrictive conventions of the traditional model by the use they may make of natural substances and by the bond they may project to their site.¹⁰ These works involve the viewer as well, not only through the forceful message they may embody about our relation to nature, but by the direct physical participation that appreciation often requires. We are beginning to discover that the history of the modern arts is more a history of perception than a history of objects, and that perception, moreover, is not just a visual act but a somatic engagement in the aesthetic field. Such a development the traditional object-oriented theory is hard put to account for.

II.

If conventional aesthetics impedes our encounter with the arts, it obstructs even more the appreciation of nature. For much, perhaps most, of our appreciative experience of nature exceeds the limits of a contemplative object and refuses to be constrained within discrete boundaries. If we are going to need a separate aesthetic for nature, why be burdened with a model so alien to experience? To avoid the difficulties in distancing nature and in assimilating natural objects to the appreciative requirement of design, what seems to be needed is an account appropriate to the distinctive qualities and demands of environment. What form might this take?

There is irony in the persistent division between the *Naturwissenschaften* and the *Geisteswissenschaften*, that sharp distinction between the natural and the cultural sciences that endeavors to protect the latter by giving cognitive status to a separation between nature and the human: the hard sciences deal with nature, the soft ones with culture. Yet the distinction itself is belied when art, one of the domains of culture, does no better than emulate the natural scientific model by adopting its conventions of objectification, distancing, and disinterested, contemplative regard.

This is not only inadequate for explaining the arts, as we have just seen. The division between nature and culture fails in another respect: it misrepresents nature. For the natural world cannot be circumscribed as easily as the classic account would have it. Nature, in the sense of the earth apart from human intervention, has mostly disappeared. We live in a world profoundly affected by human action, not just in the nearly complete destruction of the planet's primeval wilderness or in the distribution of flora and fauna far from their original habitats, but in

the alteration of the shape and character of the earth's surface, its climate, its very atmosphere.

It is true that nature, unlike cultural artifacts, seems obdurate: it may bend but it will not disappear. Yet it bends in strange ways. We are beginning to realize that the natural world is no independent sphere but is itself a cultural artifact. Not only is nature affected pervasively by human action, but our very conception of nature has emerged historically and differs widely from one cultural tradition to another. What we mean by nature, our beliefs about wilderness, the recognition of landscape, our very sense of environment have all made a historical appearance and been understood differently at different times and places.¹¹ No wonder that an aesthetics that aspires, like the sciences, to universality has difficulty accommodating nature.

There are good reasons, then, for the fact that until recently philosophers have not devoted much attention to the aesthetics of nature. Yet it was the very philosopher who attempted to formalize the structure of a universal aesthetics, Immanuel Kant, who took an important step here. His idea of the sublime captures one aspect of the aesthetic experience of nature—the capacity of the natural world to act on so monumental a scale as to exceed our powers of framing and control, and to produce in their place a sense of overwhelming magnitude and awe. A similar condition occurs in the extreme environments of desert and ice. These deserve the appellation “sublime” because here, too, an overpowering, though austere, nature bursts beyond the bounds that permit disinterested contemplation.

Perhaps the sublime offers a clue for identifying a distinctive aesthetics of nature that is unconstrained by the traditional theory of the arts.¹² For here we need no longer pursue the hopeless effort to assimilate environmental appreciation to artistic satisfaction by objectifying and contemplating an object or scene of nature with a sense of disengagement, or by replacing the design of art with the order of nature. Why not reserve the disinterested contemplation of a discrete object for art and develop a different aesthetic for natural appreciation, one that acknowledges the experience of continuity, assimilation, and engagement that nature encourages? The sublime may provide the very direction we need.

Throughout the development of the notion of the sublime there persists the sense of boundless magnitude and power. In the first century A.D. Longinus identified it in literature as “the echo of greatness of spirit.”¹³ Burke, in the mid-eighteenth century, associated the sublime in literature with the emotion of terror and its power over the imagination.¹⁴ But it was Kant who discovered its applicability to nature, where the boundaries of form and purposiveness, through which the beautiful inheres in art, in some instances no longer impose restraint and control. While natural beauty is like art in the purposive order of its forms, this, Kant claimed, does not apply to the sublime. The sublime, in fact, is not in nature but in our mind, and it is only by means of the idea of reason, through the subjective construction of judgments, that we can establish the cognitive order of purposiveness. In what Kant called the mathematically sublime, where the magnitude of natural

things surpasses our aesthetic imagination, and in the dynamically sublime, in which the might of nature overwhelms us and produces fear, the aesthetic satisfaction we feel comes from our ability to grasp this, the first by our capacity to comprehend great size intellectually, the second by our contemplation of nature's power from a secure position, thus turning the initial pain into pleasure.¹⁵ For Kant, then, both the fact of the sublime and its peculiar satisfaction are to be found in the mind through aesthetic experience and its cognitive comprehension. Once again the convenient Cartesianism of the Western tradition comes to the rescue, saving us from the terror of overwhelming magnitude and might in nature by the purposive order of thought.

That ploy is, however, no longer available. This is why nature will not stay within its prescribed limits but breaks out to engulf us. We can no longer, in ignorance of history and of experience, spin great webs of learning out of very little substance, as Francis Bacon once described the scholastic process, and contain the natural world within the constructions of the mind.¹⁶ The safety sought in seeing ourselves separate from nature we now know to be specious. What, then, if we start by recognizing that connectedness? Here the sublime can serve not as an exceptional case but as a clear model for the aesthetic experience of nature. For it is through the very sense of magnitude and might Kant identified that we grasp the true proportions of the nature-human relation, where awe mixed with humility is the guiding sentiment. This is clearly a factor in the appeal that solitude has for desert hermit and arctic explorer alike: the intensity that goes with great simplicity and physical austerity, and the sense of harmony with nature that may accompany it.¹⁷

Yet one need not immerse oneself in an extreme environment to achieve that qualitative sense of unity. The boundlessness of the natural world does not just surround us; it assimilates us. Not only are we unable to sense absolute limits in nature; we cannot distance the natural world from ourselves in order to measure and judge it with complete objectivity. Nature exceeds the human mind. This is not just because of the limitations of our present knowledge, and it is not only because of the essentially anthropomorphic character of that knowledge, which prevents us from ever going beyond the character and boundaries of our cognitive process. The ultimate limitlessness of nature comes from recognizing that the cognitive relation with things is not the exclusive relation or even the highest one we can achieve. The proper response to nature in this sense is awe, not just from its magnitude and power, but from the mystery that, as in a work of art, is part of the essential poetry of the natural world. What is boundless, then, is the ultimately ungraspable breadth of nature. And terror is the appropriate response to a natural process that exceeds our power and confronts us, with overwhelming force, as the ultimate consequence of a scientific technology where humans have become the inescapable victims of their own actions.

Is aesthetic pleasure possible under these circumstances? Clearly not, if we think it necessary to exercise ultimate control by objectifying and contemplating

nature. But if the sublime becomes our model and we accept the unity of the natural world, then we must identify that qualitative character of our experience, which becomes central on those occasions when aesthetic appreciation dominates. They are times of sensory acuteness, of a perceptual unity of nature and human, of a congruity of awareness, understanding, and involvement mixed with awe and humility, in which the focus is on the immediacy and directness of the occasion of experience. Perceiving environment from within, as it were, looking not *at* it but being *in* it, nature becomes something quite different. It is transformed into a realm in which we live as participants, not observers.¹⁸ The consequences are not de-aestheticization, a confounding of the aesthetic with the world of practical purposes and effects, as the eighteenth century would have it, but a condition that is intensely and inescapably aesthetic.

Nor need we look for occasions of a natural aesthetic only in the bold and dramatic places where Kant finds them: the ultimate immeasurableness of the universe, great gray cloud masses accompanied by crashes and flashes of thunder and lightning, a powerful hurricane, the moving mass of a mighty waterfall, the sight of the boundlessness or the overwhelming tumult of the ocean, the all-embracing vault of the starry heavens.¹⁹ These are powerful occasions, to be sure, and Kant locates their sublimity with sensitivity, not in the intellectual comprehension of their processes and extent, but in the perceptual grasp of their force and range. One cannot distance oneself from such events; in fact, part of the aesthetic power of such occasions lies in our very vulnerability. Survival and safety clearly supersede the aesthetic dimension when actual danger threatens, but our personal involvement adds to the perceptual intensity of such situations. The lookout platform of a cathedral steeple or a skyscraper, a boardwalk beyond which storm waves are crashing on the shore, a hilltop during a lightning storm all enhance the qualitative intensity of aesthetic perception with a touch of fear.

But there are gentler occasions on which we engage the natural world: canoeing a serpentine river when the quiet evening water reflects the trees and rocks along the banks so vividly as to allure the paddler into the center of a six-dimensional world, three above and another three below; camping beneath pines black against the night sky; walking through the tall grass of a hidden meadow whose tree-defined edges become the boundaries of the earth. The aesthetic mark of all such times is not disinterested contemplation but total engagement, a sensory immersion in the natural world that reaches the still uncommon experience of unity. Joined with acute perceptual consciousness and enhanced by the felt understanding of assimilated knowledge, such occasions can become clear peaks in a cloudy world, high points in a life dulled by habit and defensive disregard.

It is not the sublime alone, then, that encourages an aesthetics of engagement; natural beauty can do so as well, once we are liberated from the formalistic requirements of discreteness and order. For unlike its representations, nature does not come framed, and we can take as much aesthetic delight in profusion and continuity as we have been taught to find in regularity and symmetry. The attraction

of a spreading patch of bunchberry or a stand of wild columbine on the forest floor does not lie in its stimulus to the free play of imagination alone, as Kant would have it, but on color, shape, poignant simplicity, delicacy and, as much as anything, its gratuitous extravagance.²⁰ Formal order is but one source of aesthetic satisfaction, not the *sine qua non* of beauty. Part of the appreciation of natural beauty lies in the fascination with intricate detail, subtle tone, endless variety, and the imaginative delight in what we would call, in a human artifact, marvelous invention, all these as part of an environmental setting with which we, as appreciative participants, are continuous. Forgoing the requirements of objectification and order, we can discover beauty in a rippling brook and a fire on the hearth, to cite Kant's examples, as much as in a van Ruysdael or a Hobbema painting of them.

III.

Engagement, then, is the direction in which an aesthetics of nature can lead us. Yet adopting a participatory aesthetics transforms not only our appreciation of nature but the nature of our appreciation. For there is another alternative to the strategies of assimilating natural beauty to the arts or constructing separate accounts for each: The aesthetics of nature can serve as the model for appreciating art.

Continuity and perceptual immersion occur in our experience of art as much as in nature. Sculpture provides a clear instance of the adaptability of art to aesthetic engagement. While it appears to lend itself perfectly to traditional aesthetics, sculpture directly contradicts those conventions when it takes the form of earthworks and environments. Central to environmental art is the connection of the object with its site. In fact, functioning in important ways like seventeenth and eighteenth century English gardens, the appreciation of many earthworks and environmental art works rests on their ties with the perceiver through the meanings and associations that they evoke, as well as in the sensory bonds with site and viewer that they extend. These connections are as much a part of art as of nature. Moreover, neither site nor perceiver has sharp boundaries; each combines with the other into a single inclusive experience.²¹

In a similar way, both art and nature may exhibit some degree of order. Associating design with art mistakenly generalizes from a common but not universal formal order, since design is but a genetic explanation of the order that may be found in art. Moreover, one is not even obliged to take the essentially Kantian tack of finding order in nature to qualify it for aesthetic appreciation. While there is formal structure in a quartz crystal and a starfish, as there is in the symmetry of the Taj Mahal and Notre Dame Cathedral, art, like nature, has its share of deliberate disarray. We can find as much disorder in the opening movements of Bach's great organ Toccatas in C major and D minor and in Debussy's through-composed songs as in the irregular curve of a beach or the scattering of daisies in a field.

What draws together natural beauty and the arts are some commonalities in our relation and response: both can be experienced perceptually and both can be

appreciated aesthetically. And more particularly still, both can function reciprocally with the appreciator, enticing the participant to join in a unified perceptual situation. Such appreciation requires a radically different aesthetic from eighteenth century disinterestedness. This is an aesthetics of engagement, and it is one that environmental appreciation especially encourages.²² Applying this model of aesthetic engagement to art appreciation leads to restructuring the usual approach to art. It also suggests ways of resolving problems that result from adopting separate forms of appreciation for nature and for art.

A related issue has to do with appreciating the beauty of the beloved. This may be seen as an aspect of natural beauty that attaches to the human person, and it usually harbors an element of sexual desire, sometimes diffuse, sometimes specific.²³ Appreciation here is hardly disinterested, and the tradition in aesthetics has always had difficulty accommodating itself to this sense of beauty since, as Plato observed in the *Hippias Major*, sexual desire is not confined to the distance receptors of sight and hearing. Need we then, like Plato, be obliged to drop any claim to beauty here? Obviously yes, if we are committed to an aesthetics of disinterested contemplation; no, if we accept an aesthetics of engagement.

For the beauty of the sexually beloved does not lie in possession, itself never an intrinsic value. Neither does it lie in arousal, which is self-directed, nor in idealization, which rests on objectification. To appreciate such beauty for its own sake rests on recognizing its primarily inherent value, a value that dwells in the sensuous and other perceptual qualities of the situation and not on disinterestedness. Engagement recognizes the possibility of this aesthetic response.²⁴ Like most human values, sexuality need not be either entirely biological or sublimated into something ideal. Appreciating the beauty of the beloved in desire is fulfilled in the quality of an entire human situation enhanced by mutual contribution. This is precisely what an engaged aesthetic honors.

Again, can nature reveal the transcendent as art is capable of doing? As with sensual beauty, we can easily be seduced away from the aesthetic character of the situation: in the one case by indulging in the appeal of gratification, in the other, by abandoning ourselves entirely to some surpassing state. To reach the supersensible through communion with nature, as with art, risks forgoing the aesthetic in experience in favor of mystical transcendence. Whatever the attraction of the transcendent, it raises the danger of turning art or nature into a mere vehicle for achieving such a state. And this would abandon the intrinsic character of the aesthetic and the continuing presence of nature or art as a necessary constituent of the appreciative situation.

Yet there is something here that nature shares with art, which poets like Wordsworth recognize. There may be an easy transition from beauty to the sublime, though I suspect that both “beauty” and “sublime” require radical redefinition once one no longer associates the first with objects and the second with transcendence. Perhaps the truth approached by transcendence lies in the quality of unity with nature that aesthetic engagement encourages. The perceived sense of

continuity of our human being with the dynamic forms and processes of the natural world is a central factor in the aesthetic appreciation of nature, and it accounts for a touch of the sublime in the feeling of awe that accompanies the occasion. Transcendent no longer, the quality of numinousness persists in the sense of immanence we sometimes obtain in nature and art, and which is the fulfillment of aesthetic engagement.

What we grasp in the wilder states of nature we appreciate too in its more cultivated forms. Those environments where art and nature are deliberately fused, such as gardens, are one way a natural aesthetic is employed to evoke the sense of continuity with nature. Cultural forms and traditions mediate that unity here, as they mediate every mode of experience. There is a world of difference between a Japanese garden and a French one, a telling indication of the different worlds those cultures create. While this union of art and nature was deliberately cultivated during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the impulse to fuse them persists, and not only in modern environmental sculpture. The same fusion of art and nature occurs in modern architecture that is sensitive to its site, in urban planning that responds to geomorphological and geographical considerations, in site-specific sculpture, and in the design of urban parks. A single aesthetic applies to nature and to art because, in the final analysis, they are both cultural constructs, and so we are not talking about two things but about one.

An aesthetics of engagement thus encompasses both art and nature, and it does what we hope any good account will do—solve more problems than it creates. Moreover, aesthetic engagement offers more than a theoretical advantage; it opens regions of experience that have been closed to aesthetic appreciation by theories that have survived through exclusion. By extending appreciation to nature in all its cultural manifestations, the entire sensible world is included within the purview of aesthetics. This hardly makes the world more beautiful; if anything it confronts us with the failures of taste and judgment that have marked most industrial and commercial activities in this century. But if environment, which is nature as we live it, can have aesthetic value, so then can actions be condemned that ignore or deny that value. A universal aesthetic is therefore an aesthetic of the universe, and it offers us a goal to work for as well as a standard by which to judge our success.

Notes

- 1 See T.J. Diffey, "Natural Beauty without Metaphysics," Allen Carlson, "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature," and Stephanie Ross, "Gardens, Earthworks, and Environmental Art," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). The original version of this essay was written as a response to essays in that volume.
- 2 Diffey, "Natural Beauty without Metaphysics" and Yi-Fu Tuan, "Desert and Ice: Ambivalent Aesthetics," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*.

- 3 See my essays, "The Historicity of Aesthetics I" and "The Historicity of Aesthetics II," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 26 (1986): 101-111 and 195-203.
- 4 See my *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), Chapter 3.
- 5 Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* [1711], cited in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*, ed. A. Hofstadter and R. Kuhns (New York: Modern Library, 1964), pp. 246-7.
- 6 I argue against the objectification premise in "Art without Object," in *Creation and Interpretation*, ed. Stern, Rodman, and Cobitz (New York: Haven, 1985), pp. 63-72.
- 7 This is the tack that Carlson takes; see "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature." [Editors' Note: See also Allen Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1979): 267-276 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 2].]
- 8 This question implicates the large phenomenological literature on the lifeworld, raising issues that can only be broached here. One, of surpassing importance, is whether the lifeworld is itself a historico-cultural construct, and whether the arts of the past hundred years are fulfilling a function the arts have often had of serving as the vanguard of cultural change, a change in this case from a lifeworld of discrete objects to one of essential connections and continuities.
- 9 In *Art and Engagement*, especially in Chapters 1 and 2, I claim that the traditional theory never really gave a satisfactory account of the actual workings of the arts and that it owes its influence to its compatibility with the classic philosophic tradition rather than to its theoretical success in explaining the arts.
- 10 See Ross, "Gardens, Earthworks, and Environmental Art."
- 11 In Chapter 1 of my *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992) I discuss various meanings and offer a redefinition of nature. Our understanding of nature, wilderness, forest, and landscape has changed dramatically over time. See, for example, Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (London: Allen Lane, 1983); Marvin W. Mikesell, "Landscape," in *Man, Space, and Environment*, ed. P.W. English and R.C. Mayfield (New York: Oxford, 1972), pp. 9-15; David Lowenthal, "Is Wilderness 'Paradise Now'? Images of Nature in America," *Columbia University Forum* (1964), pp. 34-40; Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1974).
- 12 References here to traditional aesthetics are not meant to overlook the variety of different theories that have been proposed in the past. My claim is that they do nonetheless possess certain generic features, whether they rely for their identity on imitation, emotion, expression, symbol, or language. See my *Art and Engagement*, Chapter 1. In *The Theory of the Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), Francis Sparshott relates the various theories differently, deriving all later developments from what he calls "the classic line." See also my earlier book, *The Aesthetic Field* (Springfield, IL: C.C. Thomas, 1970), Chapter 1, "Surrogate Theories of Art."
- 13 Longinus, *On the Sublime* [1st Century, AD], ed. D.A. Russell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964).
- 14 Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime*

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- and Beautiful [1757], in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. Paul Langford (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).
- 15 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, [1790], trans. J.H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1951), Sections 23-30.
 - 16 Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, First Book [1605], in *Essays, Advancement of Learning, New Atlantis, and Other Pieces*, ed. R.F. Jones (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1937), p. 202.
 - 17 See Tuan, "Desert and Ice: Ambivalent Aesthetics."
 - 18 I can only mention this here, not make a case for it. I have undertaken that in *Art and Engagement*, Chapters 3 and 4.
 - 19 Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, Sections 26, 28, and 29.
 - 20 See Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, Section 22.
 - 21 In Chapters 5 and 6 of *Art and Engagement* I show how aesthetic engagement can illuminate the appreciation of traditional sculpture.
 - 22 This is not a developed case for extending the model of environmental appreciation to the arts. In Chapter 10 of *The Aesthetics of Environment* I undertook to do that.
 - 23 See Diffey, "Natural Beauty without Metaphysics." "Natural" beauty here, as elsewhere, is a misnomer. Like all forms of nature, human beauty is very much a human, cultural construct, not just by techniques of physical enhancement, but in the selection of desirable body types, physiognomies, personalities, behavior patterns, and the like.
 - 24 See my "The Sensuous and the Sensual in Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 23 (1964): 185-192, reprinted in *Philosophical Essays on Curriculum*, ed. R.S. Guttchen and B. Bandman, (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1969), pp. 306-317.

On Being Moved by Nature: Between Religion and Natural History

Noël Carroll



I. Introduction

For the last two and a half decades—perhaps spurred onwards by R.W. Hepburn’s seminal, wonderfully sensitive, and astute essay, “Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty”¹—philosophical interest in the aesthetic appreciation of nature has been gaining momentum. One of the most coherent, powerfully argued, thorough, and philosophically compelling theories to emerge from this evolving arena of debate has been developed over a series of articles by Allen Carlson.² The sophistication of Carlson’s approach—especially in terms of his careful style of argumentation—has raised the level of philosophical discussion concerning the aesthetic appreciation of nature immensely and it has taught us all what is at stake, logically and epistemologically, in advancing a theory of nature appreciation. Carlson has not only presented a bold theory of the aesthetic appreciation of nature; he has also refined a methodological framework and a set of constraints that every researcher in the field must address.

Stated summarily, Carlson’s view of the appreciation of nature is that it is a matter of scientific understanding; that is, the correct or appropriate form that the appreciation of nature—properly so called—should take is a species of natural history; appreciating nature is a matter of understanding nature under the suitable scientific categories. In appreciating an expanse of modern farm land, for example, we appreciate it by coming to understand the way in which the shaping of such a landscape is a function of the purposes of large scale agriculture.³ Likewise, the appreciation of flora and fauna is said to require an understanding of evolutionary theory.⁴

Carlson calls his framework for nature appreciation the natural environmental model.⁵ He believes that the strength of this model is that it regards nature as (a) an environment (rather than, say, a view) and (b) as natural. Moreover, the significance of (b) is that it implies that the appreciation of nature should be in terms of the qualities nature has (and these, in turn, are the qualities natural science identifies). Carlson writes, “for significant appreciation of nature, something like the knowledge and experience of the naturalist is essential.”⁶

My major worry about Carlson's stance is that it excludes certain very common appreciative responses to nature—responses of a less intellective, more visceral sort, which we might refer to as “being moved by nature.” For example, we may find ourselves standing under a thundering waterfall and be excited by its grandeur; or, standing barefooted amidst a silent arbor, softly carpeted with layers of decaying leaves, a sense of repose and homeliness may be aroused in us. Such responses to nature are quite frequent and even sought out by those of us who are not naturalists. They are a matter of being emotionally moved by nature. This, of course, does not imply that they are noncognitive, since emotional arousal has a cognitive dimension.⁷ However, it is far from clear that all the emotions appropriately aroused in us by nature are rooted in cognitions of the sort derived from natural history.

Appreciating nature for many of us, I submit, often involves being moved or emotionally aroused by nature. We may appreciate nature by opening ourselves to its stimulus, and to being put in a certain emotional state by attending to its aspects. Experiencing nature, in this mode, just is a manner of appreciating it. That is not to say that this is the only way in which we can appreciate nature. The approach of the naturalist that Carlson advocates is another way. Nor do I wish to deny that naturalists can be moved by nature or even to deny that something like our nonscientific arousal by nature might be augmented, in some cases, by the kind of knowledge naturalists possess. It is only to claim that sometimes we can be moved by nature—sans guidance by scientific categories—and that such experiences have a genuine claim to be counted among the ways in which nature may be (legitimately) appreciated.

Carlson's approach to the appreciation of nature is reformist. His point is that a number of the best-known frameworks for appreciating nature—which one finds in the literature—are wrongheaded *and* that the model of appreciation informed by naturalism, which he endorses, is the least problematic and most reasonable picture of what nature appreciation should involve. In contrast, I wish to argue that there is at least one frequently indulged way of appreciating nature that Carlson has not examined adequately, and that it need not be abjured on the basis of the kinds of arguments and considerations Carlson has adduced. It is hard to read Carlson's conclusions without surmising that he believes that he has identified the appropriate model of nature appreciation. Instead, I believe that there is one form of nature appreciation—call it being emotionally moved by nature—that (a) is a longstanding practice, (b) remains untouched by Carlson's arguments, and (c) need not be abandoned in the face of Carlson's natural environmental model.

In defending this alternative mode of nature appreciation, I am not offering it in place of Carlson's environmental model. Being moved by nature in certain ways is one way of appreciating nature; Carlson's environmental model is another. I'm for coexistence. I am specifically not arguing that, given certain traditional conceptions of the aesthetic, being moved by nature has better claims to the title of aesthetic appreciation whereas the environmental model, insofar as it involves the

subsumption of particulars under scientific categories and laws, is not an *aesthetic* mode of appreciation at all. Such an objection to Carlson's environmental model might be raised, but it will not be raised by me. I am willing to accept that the natural environmental model provides *an* aesthetic mode of appreciating nature for the reasons Carlson gives.

Though I wish to resist Carlson's environmental model of nature appreciation as an exclusive, comprehensive one, and, thereby, wish to defend a space for the traditional practice of being moved by nature, I also wish to block any reductionist account—of the kind suggested by T.J. Diffey⁸—that regards our being moved by nature as a residue of religious feeling. Diffey says, "In a secular society it is not surprising that there will be a hostility towards any religious veneration of natural beauty *and* at the same time nature will become a refuge for displaced religious emotions."⁹ But I want to stress that the emotions aroused by nature that concern me can be fully secular and have no call to be demystified as displaced religious sentiment. That is, being moved by nature is a mode of nature appreciation that is available between science and religion.

In what follows I try to show that the kinds of consideration that Carlson raises do not preclude being moved by nature as a respectable form of nature appreciation. In order to do this, I review Carlson's major arguments—which I call, respectively: science by elimination, the claims of objectivist epistemology, and the order argument. In the course of disputing these arguments, I also attempt to introduce a positive characterization of what being moved by nature involves in a way that deflects the suspicion that it should be reduced to displaced religious feeling.

II. Science by Elimination

Following Paul Ziff, Carlson points out that, in the appreciation of works of art, we know what to appreciate—in that we can distinguish an artwork from what it is not—and we know which of its aspects to appreciate—since in knowing the type of art it is, we know how it is to be appreciated.¹⁰ We have this knowledge, as Vico would have agreed, because artworks are our creations. That is, since we have made them to be objects of aesthetic attention, we understand what is involved in appreciating them.¹¹

However we explain this feature of artistic appreciation, it seems clear that classifying the kind and style of an artwork is crucial to appreciating it. But with nature—something that in large measure it is often the case that we have not made—the question arises as to how we can appreciate it. By what principles will we isolate the appreciable from what is not, and how will we select the appropriate aspects of the nature so circumscribed to appreciate? In order to answer this question, Carlson explores alternative models for appreciating nature: the object paradigm, the landscape or scenery model, and the environmental paradigm.¹²

The object paradigm of nature appreciation treats an expanse in nature as analogous to an artwork such as a nonrepresentational sculpture; as in the case of such

a sculpture, we appreciate its sensuous properties, its salient patterns, and perhaps even its expressive qualities.¹³ That is, the object model guides our attention to certain aspects of nature—such as patterned configurations—that are deemed relevant for appreciation. This is clearly a possible way of attending to nature, but Carlson wants to know whether it is an aesthetically appropriate way.¹⁴

Carlson thinks not; for there are systematically daunting disanalogies between natural expanses and works of fine art. For example, nature is said to be an indeterminate form. Where it stops is putatively ambiguous.¹⁵ But with artworks, there are frames or framelike devices (like the ropes and spaces around sculptures) that tell you where the focus of artistic attention ends. Moreover, the formal qualities of such artworks are generally contingent on such framings.¹⁶

Of course, we can impose frames on nature. We can take a rock from its natural abode and put it on a mantelpiece. Or, we can discipline our glance in such a way as to frame a natural expanse so that we appreciate the visual patterns that emerge from our own exercise in perceptual composition. But in doing this, we work against the organic unity in the natural expanse, sacrificing many of those real aesthetic features that are not made salient by our exercises in visual framing, *especially* the physical forces that make the environment what it is.¹⁷ And in this sense, the object paradigm is too exclusive; it offends through aesthetic omission.

Thus, Carlson confronts the object paradigm with a dilemma. Under its aegis, either we frame—literally or figuratively—a part of nature, thereby removing it from its organic environment (and distracting our attention from its interplay with many real and fascinating ecological forces). *OR* we leave it where it is, unframed, indeterminate, and bereft of the fixed visual patterns and qualities (that emerge from acts of framing). In the first case, the object model is insensitive; in the second, it is, putatively, inoperable.

A second paradigm for nature appreciation is the landscape or scenery model. This also looks to fine art as a precedent; it invites us to contemplate a landscape as if it were a landscape painting. Perhaps this approach gained appeal historically in the guidebooks of the eighteenth century, which recommended this or that natural prospect as affording a view reminiscent of this or that painter (such as Salvatore Rosa).¹⁸ In appreciating a landscape as a piece of scenery painting, we attend to features it might share with a landscape painting, such as its coloration and design.

But this, like the object model, also impedes comprehensive attention to the actual landscape. It directs our attention to the visual; but the full appreciation of nature comprises smells, textures, and temperatures. And landscape painting typically sets us at a distance from nature. Yet often we appreciate nature for our being amidst it.¹⁹ Paintings are two-dimensional, but nature has three dimensions; it offers a participatory space, not simply a space that we apprehend from outside.

Likewise, the picture frame excludes us whereas characteristically we are included as a self in a setting in the natural expanses we appreciate.²⁰ Thus, as with the object model of nature appreciation, the problem with the scenery model is that

it is too restrictive to accommodate all the aspects of nature that might serve as genuine objects of aesthetic attention.

Lastly, Carlson offers us the natural environmental model of appreciation. The key to this model is that it regards nature as nature. It overcomes the limitations of the object model by taking as *essential* the organic relation of natural expanses and items to their larger environmental contexts. The interplay of natural forces like winds are as significant as the sensuous shapes of the rock formations that are subject to them. On this view, appreciating nature involves attending to the organic interaction of natural forces. *Pace* the scenery model, the totality of natural forces, not just those that are salient to vision, are comprehended. Whereas the scenery paradigm proposes nature as a static array, the natural environmental approach acknowledges the dynamism of nature.

Undoubtedly the inclusiveness of the natural environmental model sounds promising. But the question still remains concerning which natural categories and relations are relevant to attending to nature as nature. It is Carlson's view that natural science provides us with the kind of knowledge that guides us to the appropriate *foci* of aesthetic significance and to the pertinent relations within their boundaries.

In order to aesthetically appreciate art, we must have knowledge of the artistic traditions that yield the relevant classificatory schemes for artists and audiences; in order to aesthetically appreciate nature, we need comparable knowledge of different environments and of their relevant systems and elements.²¹ This knowledge comes from science and natural history, including that which is embodied in common sense. Where else could it come from? What else could understanding nature as nature amount to? The knowledge we derive from art criticism and art history for the purposes of art appreciation come from ecology and natural history with respect to nature appreciation.

Carlson writes:

What I am suggesting is that the question of what to aesthetically appreciate in the natural environment is to be answered in a way analogous to the similar question about art. The difference is that in the case of the natural environment the relevant knowledge is the commonsense/scientific knowledge that we have discovered about the environment in question.²²

The structure of Carlson's argument is motivated by the pressure to discover some guidance with respect to nature appreciation that is analogous to the guidance that the fixing of artistic categories does with works of art. Three possibilities are explored: the object paradigm, the scenery paradigm, and the natural environmental paradigm. The first two are rejected because they fail to comprehensively track all the qualities and relations we would expect a suitable framework for the appreciation of nature to track. On the other hand, the natural environmental model is advanced not only because it does not occlude the kind of

attentiveness that the alternative models block, but also because it has the advantage of supplying us with classificatory frameworks, which play the role that things like genres do with respect to art, while at the same time these categories are natural (derived from natural history).

Stated formally, Carlson's argument is basically a disjunctive syllogism:

- (1) All aesthetic appreciation requires a way of fixing the appropriate *loci* of appreciative acts.
- (2) Since nature appreciation is aesthetic appreciation, then nature appreciation must have a means of fixing the appropriate *loci* of appreciative acts.
- (3) With nature appreciation, the ways of fixing the appropriate *loci* of appreciative acts are the object model, the scenic model, and the natural environmental model.
- (4) Neither the object model nor the scenic model suit nature appreciation.
- (5) Therefore, the natural environmental model (using science as its source of knowledge) is the means for fixing the *loci* of appreciative acts with respect to nature appreciation.

Of course, the most obvious line of attack to take with arguments of this sort is to ask whether it has captured the relevant field of alternatives. I want to suggest that Carlson's argument has not. Specifically, I maintain that he has not countenanced our being moved by nature as a mode of appreciating nature and that he has not explored the possibility that the *loci* of such appreciation can be fixed in the process of our being emotionally aroused by nature.

Earlier I conjured up a scene where standing near a towering cascade, our ears reverberating with the roar of falling water, we are overwhelmed and excited by its grandeur. People quite standardly seek out such experiences. They are, pretheoretically, a form of appreciating nature. Moreover, when caught up in such experiences our attention is fixed on certain aspects of the natural expanse rather than others—the palpable force of the cascade, its height, the volume of water, the way it alters the surrounding atmosphere, etc.

This does not require any special scientific knowledge. Perhaps it only requires being human, equipped with the senses we have, being small, and able to intuit the immense force, relative to creatures like us, of the roaring tons of water. Nor need the common sense of our culture come into play. Conceivably humans from other planets bereft of waterfalls could share our sense of grandeur. This is not to say that all emotional responses to nature are culture-free, but only that the pertinent dimensions of some such arousals may be.

That is, we may be aroused emotionally by nature, and our arousal may be a function of our human nature in response to a natural expanse. I may savor a winding footpath because it raises a tolerable sense of mystery in me. Unlike the scenery model of nature appreciation, what we might call the arousal model does not necessarily put us at a distance from the object of our appreciation; it may be

the manner in which we are amidst nature that has moved us to the state in which we find ourselves. Nor does the arousal model of nature restrict our response to only the visual aspects of nature. The cascade moves us through its sound, and weight, and temperature, and force. The sense of mystery awakened by the winding path is linked to the process of moving through it.

Perhaps the arousal model seems to raise the problem of framing, mentioned earlier, in a new way. Just as the object model and the scenery model appeared to impose a frame on an otherwise indeterminate nature, similarly the arousal model may appear to involve us in imposing emotional gestalts upon indeterminate natural expanses. Nevertheless, there are features of nature, especially in relation to human organisms, that, though they are admittedly “selected,” are difficult to think of as “impositions.”

Certain natural expanses have natural frames or what I prefer to call natural closure: caves, copses, grottoes, clearings, arbors, valleys, etc. And other natural expanses, though lacking frames, have features that are naturally salient for human organisms—that is, they have features such as moving water, bright illumination, etc. that draw our attention instinctually toward them. And where our emotional arousal is predicated on either natural closure or natural salience, it makes little sense to say that our emotional responses, focused on said features, are impositions.

An emotional response to nature will involve some sort of selective attention to the natural expanse. If I am overwhelmed by the grandeur of a waterfall, then certain things and not others are in the forefront of my attention. Presumably since I am struck emotionally by the grandness of the waterfall, the features that are relevant to my response have to do with those that satisfy interests in scale, notably large scale. But my arousal does not come from nowhere. The human perceptual system is already keyed to noticing salient scale differentials and the fact that I batten on striking examples of the large scale is hardly an imposition from the human point of view.

Suppose, then, that I am exhilarated by the grandeur of the waterfall. That I am exhilarated by grandeur is not an inappropriate response, since the object of my emotional arousal is grand—that is, meets the criteria of scale appropriate to grandeur, where grandeur, in turn, is one of the appropriate sources of exhilaration. In this case, our perceptual make-up initially focuses our attention on certain features of the natural expanse, which attention generates a state of emotional arousal, which state, in turn, issues in reinforcing feedback that consolidates the initial selective gestalt of the emotional arousal experience. The arousal model of nature appreciation has an account of how we isolate certain aspects of nature and why these are appropriate aspects to focus upon; that is, they are *emotionally* appropriate.

Perhaps Carlson’s response to this is that emotional responses to nature of the sort that I envision are not responses to nature as nature. This route seems inadvisable since Carlson, like Sparshott, wants us to think of the appreciator of nature

as a self in a setting, which I understand as, in part, a warning not to divorce human nature from nature.²³ Admittedly, not all of our emotional arousals in the face of nature should be ascribed to our common human nature, rather than to what is sectarian in our cultures, but there is no reason to preclude the possibility that some of our emotional arousals to nature are bred in the bone.

Conceding that we are only talking about some of our appreciative responses to nature here may seem to open another line of criticism. Implicit in Carlson's manner of argument seems to be the presupposition that what he is about is identifying the one and only form of nature appreciation. His candidate, of course, is the environmental model, which relies heavily on natural science.

I have already argued that this model is not the only respectable alternative. But another point also bears emphasis here, namely, why presume that there is only one model for appreciating nature and one source of knowledge—such as natural history—relevant to fixing our appreciative categories? Why are we supposing that there is just one model, applying to all cases, for the appropriate appreciation of nature?

That the appreciation of nature sometimes may involve emotional arousal, divorced from scientific or commonsense ecological knowledge, does not disallow that at other times appreciation is generated by the natural environmental model. Certainly a similar situation obtains in artistic appreciation. Sometimes we may be emotionally aroused—indeed, appropriately emotionally moved—without knowing the genre or style of the artwork that induces this state. Think of children amused by capers of *Commedia dell'arte* but who know nothing of its tradition or its place among other artistic genres, styles, and categories. Yet the existence of this sort of appreciative response in no way compromises the fact that there is another kind of appreciation—that of the informed connoisseur—which involves situating the features of the artwork with respect to its relevant artistic categories.

I want to say that the same is true of nature appreciation. Appreciation may sometimes follow the arousal model or the natural environmental model. Sometimes the two models may overlap—for our emotions may be aroused on the basis of our ecological knowledge. But, equally, there will be clear cases where they do not. Moreover, I see no reason to assume that these are the only models for the appropriate response to nature. In some cases—given the natural closure and salience of arrays in nature—the object model may not be out of place for, given our limited perceptual capacities, structured as they are, nature may not strike us as formally indeterminate.

My basic objection to Carlson is that emotional arousal in response to nature can be an appropriate form of nature appreciation and that the cognitive component of our emotional response does the job of fixing the aspects of nature that are relevant to appreciation. Here, I have been assuming that emotional arousal, though cognitive, need not rely on categories derived from science. But Carlson sometimes describes his preferred source of knowledge as issuing from common sense/science. So perhaps the way out of my objection is to say that with my cases

of being moved by nature, the operative cognitions are rooted in commonsense knowledge of nature.

A lot depends here on what is included in commonsense knowledge of nature. I take it that for Carlson this is a matter of knowing in some degree how nature works; it involves, for example, some prescientific, perhaps folk, understanding of things like ecological systems. That I know, in my waterfall example, that the stuff that is falling down is water is not commonsense knowledge of nature in the way that Carlson seems to intend with phrases like common sense/science. For the knowledge in my case need not involve any systemic knowledge of nature's working of either a folk or scientific origin. And if this is so, then we can say that we are emotionally moved by nature where the operative cognitions that play a constitutive role in our response do not rely on the kind of commonsense systemic knowledge of natural processes that Carlson believes is requisite for the aesthetic appreciation of nature. And, perhaps even more clearly, we can be moved by nature where our cognitions do not mobilize the far more formal and recondite systemic knowledge found in natural history and science.

III. The Claims of Objectivist Epistemology

One reason, as we have just seen, that prompts Carlson to endorse natural history as the appropriate guide to nature appreciation is that it appears to provide us with our only satisfactory alternative. I have disputed this. But Carlson has other compelling motives for the type of nature appreciation he advocates. One of these is epistemological. It has already been suggested; now is the time to bring it center-stage.

Echoing Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste," Carlson's impressive "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment, and Objectivity" begins with the conviction that certain of the aesthetic judgments that we issue with respect to nature—such as "the Grand Tetons are majestic"—are or can be appropriate, correct, or true. That is, certain aesthetic judgments of nature are objective. Were someone to assert that "the Grand Tetons are paltry," without further explanation, our response would converge on the consensus that the latter assertion is false.

However, though the conviction that aesthetic judgments of nature can be objective is firm, it is nevertheless difficult to square with the best available models we possess for elucidating the way in which aesthetic judgments of art are objective. Indeed, given our best models of the way that aesthetic judgments of art are objective, we may feel forced to conclude that aesthetic judgments of nature are relativistic or subjective, despite our initial conviction that aesthetic judgments of nature can be objective.

So the question becomes a matter of explaining how our aesthetic judgments of nature can be objective. This is a problem because, as just mentioned, reigning accounts of how aesthetic judgments of art are objective have been taken to imply that aesthetic judgments of nature cannot be objective.

In order to get a handle on this problem, we need, of course, to understand the relevant theory of art appreciation that ostensibly renders nature appreciation subjective or relative. The particular theory that Carlson has in mind is Kendall Walton's notion of categories of art. This theory is an example of a broader class of theories—that would include institutional theories of art—which can be usefully thought of as cultural theories. Roughly speaking, cultural theories of art supply the wherewithal to ground aesthetic judgments of art objectively by basing such judgments on the cultural practice and forms—such as artistic genres, styles, and movements—in which and through which artworks are created and disseminated.

On Walton's account, for example, an aesthetic judgment concerning an artwork can be assessed as true or false. The truth value of such judgments is a function of two factors, specifically: the non-aesthetic perceptual properties of the artwork (for example, dots of paint), and the status of said properties when the artwork is situated in its correct artistic category (for example, pointillism). Psychologically speaking, all aesthetic judgments of art, whether they are subjective or objective, require that we locate the perceived, nonaesthetic properties of the artwork in some category. For example, if an uninformed viewer finds the image in a cubist painting woefully confused, it is likely that that viewer regards the work in terms of the (albeit wrong) category of a realistic, perspectival representation.

However, logically speaking, if an aesthetic judgment is true (or appropriate), then that is a function of the perceived, nonaesthetic properties of the artwork being comprehended within the context of the correct category of art. In terms of the preceding example, it is a matter of viewing the painting in question under the category of cubism. Consequently, the objectivity of aesthetic judgments of art depends upon identifying the correct category for the artwork in question.

A number of circumstances can count in determining the category of art that is relevant to the aesthetic judgment of an artwork. But some of the most conclusive depend on features relating to the origin of the work: such as which category (genre, style, movement) the artist intended for the artwork, as well as cultural factors, such as whether the category in question is a recognized or well-entrenched one. These are not the only considerations that we use in fixing the relevant category of an artwork; but they are, nevertheless, fairly decisive ones.

However, if these sorts of considerations are crucial in fixing the relevant categories of artworks, it should be clear that they are of little moment when it comes to nature. For nature is not produced by creators whose intentions can be used to isolate the correct categories for appreciating a given natural expanse nor is nature produced with regard for recognized cultural categories. But if we cannot ascertain the correct category upon which to ground our aesthetic judgments of nature, then those judgments cannot be either true or false. Moreover, since the way in which we fix the category of a natural object or expanse appears to be fairly open, our aesthetic judgments of nature appear to gravitate towards subjectivity. That is, they do not seem as though they can be objective judgments, despite our starting intuition that some of them are.

The structure of Carlson's argument revolves around a paradox. We start with the conviction that some aesthetic judgments of nature can be objective, but then the attempt to explain this by the lights of our best model of aesthetic objectivity with respect to the arts, indicates that no aesthetic judgment of nature can be objective (because there are no correct categories for nature). Carlson wants to dissolve this paradox by removing the worry that there are no objective, aesthetic judgments of nature. He does this by arguing that we do have the means for identifying the relevant, correct categories that are operative in genuine aesthetic judgments of nature. These are the ones discovered by natural history and science.

For example, we know that the relevant category for aesthetically appreciating whales is that of the mammal rather than that of fish as a result of scientific research. Moreover, these scientific categories function formally or logically in the same way in nature appreciation that art historical categories function in art appreciation. Thus, the logical form, though not the content, of nature appreciation corresponds to that of art appreciation. And insofar as the latter can be objective in virtue of its form, the former can be as well.

Another way to characterize Carlson's argument is to regard it as a transcendental argument. It begins by assuming as given that nature appreciation can be objective and then goes on to ask how this is possible—especially since there does not seem to be anything like correct categories of art to ground objectivity when it comes to nature appreciation. But, then, the possibility of the objectivity of nature appreciation is explained by maintaining that the categories discovered by natural history and science are available to play the role in securing the objectivity of aesthetic judgments of nature in a way that is analogous to the service performed by art historical categories for art.

Thus, for epistemological reasons, we are driven to the view of nature appreciation as a species of natural history. Effectively, it is advanced as the only way to support our initial intuitions that some aesthetic judgments of nature can be objective. Moreover, any competing picture of nature appreciation, if it is to be taken seriously, must have comparable means to those of the natural environmental model for solving the problem of the objectivity of nature appreciation.

Of course, I do not wish to advance the "being moved by nature" view as competing with the natural environmental approach. Rather, I prefer to think of it as a coexisting model. But even as a coexisting model, it must be able to solve the problem of objectivity. However, the solution to the problem is quite straightforward when it comes to being emotionally moved by nature.

For being emotionally moved by nature is just a subclass of being emotionally moved. And on the view of the emotions that I, among many others, hold, an emotion can be assessed as either appropriate or inappropriate. In order to be afraid, I must be afraid of something, say an oncoming tank. My emotion—fear in this case—is directed; it takes a particular object. Moreover, if my fear in a given case is appropriate, then the particular object of my emotional state must meet certain criteria, or what are called "formal objects" in various philosophical idioms.

For example, the formal object of fear is the dangerous. Or, to put the point in less stilted language: if my fear of the tank (the particular object of my emotion) is appropriate, then it must satisfy the criterion that I believe the tank to be dangerous to me. If, for instance, I say that I am afraid of chicken soup, but also that I do not believe that chicken soup is dangerous, then my fear of chicken soup is inappropriate. C.D. Broad writes: "It is appropriate to cognize what one takes to be a threatening object with some degree of fear. It is inappropriate to cognize what one takes to be a fellow man in undeserved pain or distress with satisfaction or with amusement."²⁴

Of course, if emotions can be assessed with respect to appropriateness and inappropriateness, then they are open to cognitive appraisal. Ronald deSousa says, for example, that "appropriateness is the truth of the emotions."²⁵ We can assess the appropriateness of the emotion of fear for an emoter in terms of whether or not she believes that the particular object of her emotion is dangerous. We can, furthermore, assess whether the appropriateness of her fear ought to be shared by others by asking whether the beliefs, thoughts, or patterns of attention that underpin her emotions are the sorts of beliefs, thoughts, or patterns of attention that it is reasonable for others to share. Thus we can determine whether her fear of the tank is objective in virtue of whether her beliefs about the dangerousness of the tank, in the case at hand, is a reasonable belief for the rest of us to hold.

Turning from tanks to nature, we may be emotionally moved by a natural expanse—excited, for instance, by the grandeur of a towering waterfall. All things being equal, being excited by the grandeur of something that one believes to be of a large scale is an appropriate emotional response. Moreover, if the belief in the large scale of the cascade is one that is true for others as well, then the emotional response of being excited by the grandeur of the waterfall is an objective one. It is not subjective, distorted, or wayward. If someone denies being moved by the waterfall, but agrees that the waterfall is large scale and says nothing else, we are apt to suspect that his response, as well as any judgments issued on the basis of that response, is inappropriate. If he does not agree that the waterfall is of a large scale, and does not say why, we will suspect him either of not understanding how to use the notion of large scale, or of irrationality. If he disagrees that the waterfall is of a large scale because the galaxy is much much larger, then we will try to convince him that he has the wrong comparison class—urging, perhaps, that he should gauge the scale of the waterfall in relation to human scale.

In introducing the notion of the "wrong comparison class," it may seem that I have opened the door to Carlson's arguments. But I do not think that I have. For it is not clear that in order to establish the relevant comparison class for an emotional response to nature one must resort to scientific categories. For example, we may be excited by the grandeur of a blue whale. I may be moved by its size, its force, the amount of water it displaces, etc., but I may think that it is a fish. Nevertheless, my being moved by the grandeur of the blue whale is not inappropriate. Indeed, we may be moved by the skeleton of a *Tyrannosaurus Rex* without knowing

whether it is the skeleton of a reptile, a bird, or a mammal. We can be moved by such encounters, without knowing the natural history of the thing encountered, on the basis of its scale, along with other things, relative to ourselves.

Such arousals may or may not be appropriate for us and for others. Moreover, judgments based on such emotional responses—like “that whale excites grandeur” or “the Grand Tetons are majestic”—can be objective. Insofar as being moved by nature is a customary form of appreciating nature, then it can account for the objectivity of some of our aesthetic judgments of nature. Thus, it satisfies the epistemological challenge whose solution Carlson appears to believe favors only his natural environmental model for the aesthetic appreciation of nature. Or, to put it another way, being moved by nature remains a way of appreciating nature that may coexist with the natural environmental model.

At one point, Carlson concedes that we can simply enjoy nature—“we can, of course, approach nature as we sometimes approach art, that is, we can simply enjoy its forms and colors or enjoy perceiving it however we may happen to.”²⁶ But this is not a very deep level of appreciation for Carlson, for, on his view, depth would appear to require objectivity. Perhaps what Carlson would say about my defense of being moved by nature is that being emotionally aroused by nature falls into the category of *merely* enjoying nature and, as an instance of that category, it isn’t really very deep.

Undoubtedly, being moved by nature may be a way of enjoying nature. However, insofar as being moved by nature is a matter of being moved by appropriate objects, it is not dismissable as enjoying nature in whatever way we please. Furthermore, if the test of whether our appreciation of nature is deep is whether the corresponding judgments are susceptible to objective, cognitive appraisal, I think I have shown that some cases can pass this test. Is there any reason to think that being moved by nature must be any less deep a response than attending to nature with the eyes of the naturalist?

I would be very suspicious of an affirmative answer to this question. Of course, part of the problem is that what makes an appreciative response to nature shallow or deep is obscure. Obviously, a naturalist’s appreciation of nature could be deep in the sense that it might go on and on as the naturalist learns more and more about nature, whereas a case of emotional arousal with respect to nature might be more consummatory. Is the former case deeper than the latter? Are the two cases even commensurable? Clearly, time alone cannot be a measure of depth. But how exactly are we to compare appreciative stances with respect to depth?

Maybe there is no way. But if the depth of a response is figured in terms of our intensity of involvement and its “thorough-goingness,”²⁷ then there is no reason to suppose that being moved by nature constitutes a shallower form of appreciation than does appreciating nature scientifically. The Kantian apprehension of sublimity²⁸—and its corresponding aesthetic judgment—though it may last for a delimited duration, need not be any less deep than a protracted teleological judgment.

Again, it is not my intention to dispute the kind of appreciation that Carlson

defends under the title of the natural environmental model. It is only to defend the legitimacy of an already well-entrenched mode of nature appreciation that I call being moved by nature. This mode of nature appreciation can pay the epistemological bill that Carlson presupposes any adequate model of nature appreciation should accommodate. It need not be reducible to scientific appreciation, nor must it be regarded as any less deep than appreciation informed by natural history.

Of course, it may seem odd that we can appreciate nature objectively this way when it seems that a comparable form of appreciation is not available to art. But the oddity here vanishes when we realize that to a certain extent we are able to appreciate art and render objective aesthetic judgments of artworks without reference to precise art historical categories. One may find a fanfare in a piece of music stirring and objectively assert that it is stirring without any knowledge of music history and its categories. Being emotionally aroused by nature in at least certain cases need be no different.

Carlson may be disposed to question whether being emotionally moved by nature is really a matter of responding to nature as nature. Perhaps he takes it to be something like a conceptual truth that, given the culture we inhabit, attending to nature as nature can only involve attending to it scientifically. However, if I am taken with the grace of a group of deer vaulting a stream, I see no reason to suppose that I am not responding to nature as nature. Moreover, any attempt to regiment the notion of responding to nature as nature so that it only strictly applies to scientific understanding appears to me to beg the question.

IV. Order Appreciation

The most recent argument that Carlson has advanced in favor of the natural environmental model of nature appreciation is what might be called the order argument.²⁹ In certain respects, it is reminiscent of his earlier arguments, but it does add certain new considerations that are worth our attention. Like his previous arguments, Carlson's order argument proceeds by carefully comparing the form of nature appreciation with that of art appreciation.

One paradigmatic form of art appreciation is design appreciation. Design appreciation presupposes that the artwork has a creator who embodies the design in an object or a performance, and that the design embodied in the artwork indicates how we are to take it. However, this model of appreciation is clearly inappropriate for nature appreciation since nature lacks a designer.

Nevertheless, there is another sort of art appreciation that has been devised in order to negotiate much of the *avant-garde* art of the twentieth century. Carlson calls this type of appreciation order appreciation. When, for example, we are confronted by something like Duchamp's *Fountain*, the design of the object does not tell us how to take it or appreciate it. Instead, we rely on certain stories about how the object came to be selected by Duchamp in order to make a point. These stories

inform us of the ideas and beliefs that lead an *avant-garde* artist to produce or to select (in the case of a found object) the artwork.

These stories direct us in the appropriate manner of appreciating the object; they guide us in our selection of the relevant features of the work for the purposes of appreciation. They do the work with unconventional, experimental art that design does with more traditional art. For example, our knowledge, given a certain art historical narrative, of Surrealism's commitment to revealing the unconscious, alerts us to the importance of incongruous, dreamlike juxtapositions in paintings by Dali.

For Carlson, design appreciation is obviously ill-suited to nature appreciation. On the other hand, something like order appreciation appears to fit the case of nature appreciation. We can appreciate nature in terms of the forces that bring natural configurations about, and we can be guided to the relevant features of nature by stories. But where do these stories come from? At an earlier stage in our culture, they may have come from mythology. But at this late date, they come from the sciences, including astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, genetics, meteorology, geology, and so on. These sciences, and the natural histories they afford, guide our attention to the relevant forces that account for the features of nature worthy of attention.

Basically, Carlson's most recent argument is that art appreciation affords two possible models for nature appreciation: design appreciation and order appreciation. Design appreciation, however, is clearly inadmissible. That leaves us with order appreciation. However, the source of the guiding stories pertinent to the order appreciation of nature differ from those that shape order appreciation with respect to art. The source of the latter is art history while the source of the former is natural history.

But once again Carlson's argument is open to the charge that he has not canvassed all of the actual alternatives. One's appreciation of art need not fall into either the category of design appreciation or that of order appreciation. We can sometimes appreciate art appropriately by being moved by it. Moreover, this is true of the *avant-garde* art that Carlson suggests requires order appreciation as well as of more traditional art.

For example, Man Ray's *The Gift* is an ordinary iron with pointed nails affixed to its smooth bottom. Even if one does not know that it is a specimen of Dada, and even if one lacks the art historical story that tells one the ideology of Dada, reflecting on *The Gift* one may readily surmise that the object is at odds with itself—you cannot press trousers with it—in a way that is brutally sardonic and that arouses dark amusement. Similarly, one can detect the insult in Duchamp's *Fountain* without knowing the intricate dialectics of art history, just as one may find certain Surrealist paintings haunting without knowing the metaphysical, psychological, and political aims of the Surrealist movement.

As it is sometimes with art, so is it with nature. In both cases, we may be emotionally moved by what we encounter without any really detailed background in art history or natural history. With respect to both art and nature, emotional arousal

can be a mode of appreciation, and it is possible, in a large number of cases, to determine whether the emotional arousal is appropriate or inappropriate without reference to any particularly specific stories of either the art-history or the natural-history varieties.

A parade or a sunset may move us, and this level of response, though traditionally well-known, need not be reduced to either design appreciation or order appreciation, nor must it be guided by art history or by natural history. Insofar as Carlson's approach to both art and nature appears wedded to certain types of "professional" knowledge as requisite for appreciation, he seems to be unduly hasty in closing off certain common forms of aesthetic appreciation. This is not said in order to reject the sort of informed appreciation Carlson advocates, but only to suggest that certain more naive forms of emotive, appreciative responses may be legitimate as well.³⁰

I have argued that one form of nature appreciation is a matter of being aroused emotionally by the appropriate natural objects. This talk of the emotions, however, may seem suspicious to some. Does it really seem reasonable to be emotionally moved by nature? If we feel a sense of security when we scan a natural expanse, doesn't that sound just too mystical? Perhaps, our feeling, as Diffey has suggested, is some form of displaced religious sentiment. Maybe being moved by nature is some sort of delusional state worthy of psychoanalysis or demystification.

Of course, many emotional responses to nature—such as being frightened by a tiger—are anything but mystical. But it may seem that others—particularly those that are traditionally exemplary of aesthetic appreciation, like finding a landscape to be serene—are more unfathomable and perhaps shaped by repressed religious associations. However, I think that there is reliable evidence that many of our emotional responses to nature have a straightforwardly secular basis.

For example, in his classic *The Experience of Landscape*,³¹ and in subsequent articles,³² Jay Appleton has defended the view that our responses to landscape are connected to certain broadly evolutionary interests that we take in landscapes. Appleton singles out two significant variables in our attention to landscape—what he calls prospect (a landscape opportunity for keeping open the channels of perception) and refuge (a landscape opportunity for achieving concealment).

That is, given that we are the kind of animal we are, we take a survival interest in certain features of landscapes: open vistas give us a sense of security insofar as we can see there is no threat approaching, while enclosed spaces reassure us that there are places in which to hide. We need not be as theoretically restrictive as Appleton is and maintain that these are the major foci of our attention to landscape. But we can agree that features of landscape like prospect and refuge may cause our humanly emotional responses to natural expanses in terms of the way they address our deep-seated, perhaps tacit, interests in the environment as a potential theater of survival.

Thus, when we find a natural environment serene, part of the cause of that sense of serenity might be its openness—the fact that nothing can approach us unex-

pectedly across its terrain. And such a response need not be thought to be mystical nor a matter of displaced religion, if it is connected to information processing molded by our long-term evolution as animals.

Other researchers have tried to isolate further features of landscape—such as mystery and legibility³³—that shape our responses to natural expanses in terms of a sense, however intuitive and unconscious, of the sorts of experiences we would have—such as ease of locomotion, of orientation, of exploration, and so on—in the environment viewed. That is, our perhaps instinctive sense of how it would be to function in a given natural environment may be part of the cause of our emotional arousal with respect to it. A landscape that is very legible—articulated throughout with neat subdivisions—may strike us as hospitable and attractive in part because it imparts such a strong sense of how we might move around and orient ourselves inside of it.

Earlier I sketched a scene in which we found ourselves in an arbor, carpeted by layers of decaying foliage and moss. I imagined that in such a situation we might feel a sense of solace, repose, and homeyness. And such an emotional state might be caused by our tacit recognition of its refuge potential. On this view, I am not saying that we consciously realize that the arbor is a suitable refuge and appreciate it as such. Rather the fact that it is a suitable refuge acts to causally trigger our emotional response, which takes the arbor as its particular object and responds to it with a feeling of repose and homeyness, focusing on such features as its enclosure and softness, which features are appropriate to the feeling of solace and homeyness.

Our feeling is not a matter of residual mysticism or religious sentiment, but is perhaps instinctually grounded. Moreover, if such a scenario is plausible for at least some of our emotional responses to nature, then it is not the case that being aroused by nature is always a repressed religious response. Some responses of some observers may be responses rooted in associations of nature with the handiwork of the gods. But other emotional responses, appropriate ones, may have perfectly secular, naturalistic explanations, which derive from the kinds of insights that Appleton and others have begun to enumerate.

Admitting that our emotional responses to nature have naturalistic explanations, of course, does not entail a reversion to the natural environmental model of nature appreciation. For such explanations pertain to how our emotional responses may be caused. And when I appreciate a natural expanse by being emotionally aroused by it, the object of my emotional state need not be the recognition of my instinctual response to, for example, prospects. Perhaps one could appreciate nature *à la* Carlson from an evolutionary point-of-view in which the focus of our attention is the interaction of our emotions with the environment as that interaction is understood to be shaped by the forces of evolution. But this is not typically what one has in mind with the notion of being moved by nature.

In conclusion: to be moved by nature is to respond to the features of natural expanses—such as scale and texture—with the appropriate emotions. This is one

traditional way of appreciating nature. It need not rely upon natural history nor is it a residual form of mysticism. It is one of our characteristic forms of nature appreciation—not reducible without remainder to either science or religion.

Notes

- 1 R.W. Hepburn, "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty," in *British Analytical Philosophy*, eds. Bernard Williams and Alan Montefiore (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966); reprinted in R.W. Hepburn, *Wonder and Other Essays* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984) [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 1].
- 2 See especially: Allen Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1979): 267-276 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 2]; "Formal Qualities in the Natural Environment," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 13 (1979): 99-114; "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment, and Objectivity," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 40 (1981): 15-27; "Saito on the Correct Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 20 (1986): 85-93; "On Appreciating Agricultural Landscapes," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43 (1985): 301-312; "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, eds. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Barry Sadler and Allen Carlson, "Environmental Aesthetics in Interdisciplinary Perspective," in *Environmental Aesthetics: Essays in Interpretation*, eds. Barry Sadler and Allen Carlson (Victoria, British Columbia: University of Victoria Press, 1982); and Allen Carlson and Barry Sadler, "Towards Models of Environmental Appreciation," in *Environmental Aesthetics: Essays in Interpretation*.
- 3 See Carlson, "Appreciating Agricultural Landscapes."
- 4 See Carlson, "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature."
- 5 Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," p. 274 [this volume, p. 72].
- 6 Carlson, "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment," p. 25.
- 7 See, for example, William Lyons, *Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), especially Chapter 4.
- 8 T.J. Diffey, "Natural Beauty without Metaphysics," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- 10 Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," p. 267 [this volume, p. 63].
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 This is the way that the argument is set up in "Appreciation and the Natural Environment." In "Formal Qualities in the Natural Environment," the object paradigm and the scenery model, it seems to me, both get assimilated under what might be called the formal qualities model.
- 13 Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," p. 268 [this volume, p. 64].
- 14 *Ibid.*

- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Carlson, "Formal Qualities," pp. 108-109.
- 17 Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," p. 269 [this volume, p. 68].
- 18 See for example, Peter Bicknell, *Beauty, Horror and Immensity: Picturesque Landscape in Britain 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
- 19 Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," p. 271 [this volume, p. 69].
- 20 Carlson, "Formal Qualities," p. 110.
- 21 Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," p. 273 [this volume, pp. 71-72].
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Francis Sparshott, "Figuring the Ground: Notes on Some Theoretical Problems of the Aesthetic Environment," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 6 (1972).
- 24 C.D. Broad, "Emotion and Sentiment," *Critical Essays in Moral Philosophy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 293.
- 25 Ronald deSousa, "Self-Deceptive Emotions," in *Explaining Emotions*, ed. Amelie Okesenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 285.
- 26 Carlson, "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment," p. 25.
- 27 A test suggested by Robert Solomon in "On Kitsch and Sentimentality," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 49 (1981): 9.
- 28 See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement* [1790], trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), especially the "Analytic of the Sublime."
- 29 See Carlson, "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature."
- 30 Toward the end of "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature," Carlson does refer to certain responses to nature, such as awe and wonder, that sound like the type of emotional responses I have been discussing. He thinks that even armed with the natural environmental model, we may become aware that nature is still mysterious to us and other. And, in consequence, we feel awe and wonder. I do not want to deny that we may come to feel awe and wonder at nature through the process Carlson describes. However, I do not think that this is the only way that we can be overwhelmed with awe in the face of nature. We may, for example, be struck by the scale of nature, without any reference to scientific categories, and be overwhelmed by awe. Thus, though there may be a route to awe through the natural environmental model, it is not the only route. There are still other ways in which we may be moved to awe by nature sans natural history. Consequently, the account of awe that Carlson offers does not eliminate the more naïve model of emotional arousal that I have been defending.
- 31 Jay Appleton, *The Experience of Landscape* (New York: Wiley, 1975).
- 32 Jay Appleton, "Prospects and refuges revisited," in *Environmental Aesthetics: Theory, Research, and Applications*, ed. Jack L. Nasar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); and Jay Appleton, "Pleasure and the Perception of Habitat: A Conceptual Framework," in *Environmental Aesthetics: Essays in Interpretation*.
- 33 Stephen Kaplan, "Perception and Landscape: Conceptions and Misconceptions," in *Environmental Aesthetics: Theory, Research, and Applications*, pp. 49-51. See also Kaplan's "Where Cognition and Affect Meet: A Theoretical Analysis of Preference," in the same volume.

Icebreakers: Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics

Stan Godlovitch



I. Victimless Vandalism?

Alberta's a pretty cold place and it helps if you get to appreciate ice. Each winter, our local river, the Bow, a fast stream born in the Rockies, freezes nearly all the way across. Spreading out from both banks, the ice is often several feet thick. Come early spring, these broad ice shelves break up and large slabs are shoved in piles onto the shore. After about a month, they wither under the sun and eventually disappear.

No one enchanted by the world can fail to be attracted by this seasonal show. For those convinced that nature must match up to us, this gallery of blocks counts at least as a contribution to some imaginable proto-sculpture. For those who take the world much as it is without anxiety about Culture and Meaning and Agency and High Art, these glassy masses, in a good year, would steal any prize.

I often walk along the Bow, especially during the breakup. In spring it's particularly easy to convince my boy Daniel to keep me company because of another seasonal treat. With the sun beating on these blocks followed by the dark cold of night, the predictable expansion and contraction causes countless stress fractures within. What appears outwardly as a stony integrity masks a tense inner decay ready to show itself when properly triggered. Past a certain threshold of strain, parts of these blocks will rupture into a shower of splinters that spread round their base like a diamond scree. The release sounds like the random chimes of breaking glass.

If you leave the world be, these rupture thresholds ripen gently, and the blocks deteriorate dignifiedly quite like the sandstone castles of southern Utah. But, as every child quickly learns, you can hurry the process with stunning effect by applying gratuitous force just so to certain vulnerable points. Rocks do the trick, and so does the well-placed kick. Such curt blows liberate a thousand elastic stresses that, when relaxed simultaneously, launch a noisy shower of icicles. When you're eight or so, you just can't get your fill of this adventure. The odd grown-up joins in too. Having reduced a stretch of the Bow Gallery to rubble, the vandals head home, ready to lay waste the arctic the next sunny day.

II. A Natural Aesthetic for Environmentalism

What's the moral? What principles are at stake? Pompously put, the Bow massacre raises questions about beauty, time, and nature. Should it make any difference to us that some things of aesthetic value might be transient? Should an aesthetic appreciation of nature require us to respect scales of space and time that may have little significance from a human-centered perspective? If so, isn't it curious that the aesthetic dimension, rooted firmly and, some may argue, necessarily in the realities of human perception, should have to disavow that very limit when directed to the natural sphere. Must we adopt another perspective here? Is there another one to adopt?

Any merit these questions have flows from an uncustomary power the aesthetic outlook acquires in reflections about environmentalism, the view that nature needs protecting. It is difficult if not foolish to defend environmental principles on instrumental or purely utilitarian grounds.¹ Environmentalists who avoid appeals to utility may extend concerns to other species by attributing rights to them. But even this may frustrate the aims of environmentalism. Sometimes we can't plausibly refer to a violation of rights. Do whole species have rights? Forests? We may even resort to inventing a fictional rights-holder just to have a target for possible misconduct. But, we can't speak coherently of the rights of rivers or sand dunes.

One environmental view stresses non-interventionism, pressing us to accept the natural world on its own terms. To justify protecting nature as it is and not merely as it is for us, we must demonstrate that nature has intrinsic worth. Supposing we reject stock moral appeals to rights and benefits, what can replace them? Well, the aesthetic sphere recognizes non-moral intrinsic value. For an aesthetic appeal to work, an argument must be mounted that identifies in nature that which overridingly commands our regard. To do so, such a natural aesthetic must forswear the anthropocentric limits that fittingly define and dominate our aesthetic response to, and regard for, cultural objects. This makes of natural aesthetics a distinctive pursuit. How such a non-anthropocentric aesthetic is possible, how it can appear to shed such limits, if it can, is my concern here.

I begin by distinguishing between what I call *Centric* and *Acentric* forms of environmentalism. I propose that only acentric environmentalism takes into account nature as a whole; if we wish to adopt an acentric environmentalism, we require a corresponding acentric natural aesthetic to ground it.

Centric positions locate the value or benefit flowing from a principle in beings to which a point of view may be ascribed; roughly, beings to which we may naturally attribute a center of consciousness or apperception, however dark the notion. Such beings have perspectives such that we can understand why it might matter-to-them what might happen, even if we may not be able to articulate or even understand what might be the matter-to-them. Rocks and rivers don't qualify; nematodes do. If it makes sense to enact a policy for some such being, that policy instantiates a centric view. Any environmentalism that aims to preserve the earth for its inhab-

itants is centric. Centric Environmentalism is biocentric with both Restricted and General forms, anthropocentrism being typical of the first and full biocentrism of the second. Anthropocentrism may range more widely than may be obvious. For, suppose we were colonized by a relatively benign fully rational extra-terrestrial species. We might well include this species under the “ratiocentric” umbrella that favors us. Biocentrism itself may come specialized as zoocentrism and botanocentrism. Strictly speaking, only zoocentrism can be centric because although plants clearly can benefit and be adversely affected, they do not enjoy an outlook of any description.

In Acentric positions, the value expressed in a principle cannot reflect the point of view of the recipient because no such point of view exists. Thus Acentrism reaches toward the notion of a moral perspective toward “mere things.” Any moral relevance in the distinction between living and non-living is lost in acentrism. Strip-mining the moon becomes morally as problematic as strip-whaling the seas. Nothing distinguishes leaving be Venusian craters or the Amazon rainforest, between active lava flows and the ecology of the Serengeti. Acentrism lacks and hence remains indifferent to any special focus, any moral dualism. It neither draws nor presupposes any relevant categorical or moral distinction between the animate and the inanimate. This gives it a distinctive, and distinctively weird, non-perspectival universality.

Acentrism addresses a limitation in centricism: namely, its fragmented view of nature. Each form of centric environmentalism rests on special interests, centers of concern. Centricism treats nature as particulate and its parts as partisan. Further, centricism is predicated upon the continued interests of particular parties and thus prejudicially concentrates, coagulates, respect for them. Oddly, centric environmentalism dignifies while not actually articulating belief in natural fixity, stasis, by assigning special virtue to conservation, to saving natural things as they are, and restoring them as they once were. This runs counter to one truism about nature: everything that comes to be passes away. Nature’s inherent flux is contradicted in conservationism. The conservationist impulse is primarily an expression of cultural, not natural, value. To save, to bank, to preserve, to keep unchanged, embalmed—these are the engines of tradition, the hallmark of culture. Nature has neither parts nor tradition nor history.² Centric environmentalism fails to reflect nature as a whole because nature is apportioned and segmented by it.

Because acentric environmentalism cannot rest on the rights and benefits sustaining biocentrism, it could appeal to an aesthetic that rejects the limits that fittingly define and dominate our response to, and regard for, cultural objects, artworks. To appreciate nature on its own terms aesthetically requires minimally the acknowledgement that nature is neither artifactual nor quasi-artifactual. To regard nature as itself we cannot “culturize” it; we cannot pretend that it looks or behaves like our artworld, not without creating out of it a “de-natured” artifact.

This tension between aesthetic appreciation appropriate to art and to nature Allen Carlson recognizes in his critique of the “object” and “landscape” paradigms

of appreciation. Basically, Carlson rues the artificiality (and often triviality) of perspective in both attempts to fit nature within a frame, so to speak. Later, I consider Carlson's positive view, the "environmental model," a more holistic stance, which, I argue, imposes a different kind of frame. I pursue a frame-free perspective, a move behind the manifold of perception.³

To regard nature aesthetically as itself, as primordially non-artifactual, thus calls for an acentric aesthetic, one typified not so much by its object as by its attitude. Of course, the object appropriate to this acentric attitude is nature as conceived through acentric environmentalism. The only way one can attain a moral regard for the nature of acentric environmentalism is by appreciating nature through an acentric aesthetic.

III. The Arbitrariness of Aesthetic Appreciation

Before considering an acentric natural aesthetic, I have to consider the odd implication that any culture-inspired (i.e., centric) natural aesthetic is somehow arbitrary. I think it no more odd to regard our conventional centric natural aesthetic arbitrary than it is so to regard our conventional anthropocentric morality. This needs elaboration.

There is something aesthetically offensive about wanton environmental destruction even when no habitat is jeopardized. Imagine bulldozing down the great Navaho sandstone castles of Monument Valley. But how far do our irritations extend? Just how selectively sensitive are we? How about smashing ice blocks heaved up in spring breakup? Is this any less obnoxious? Well, yes it is, we might say, because the ice will melt anyway, and, besides, it is renewed each spring. But the great stone monuments too will crumble to dust and will rise again the next time a massive tectonic subduction heaves the interior plateau high up leaving it easy prey to the wiles of erosion. Ah, we say resignedly, Life, Human Life, is not long enough to enjoy geological renewal.

Can it come to this, that our standard natural aesthetic is governed by our temporal puniness? Probably so, and, furthermore, no one should be surprised. The aesthetic dimension grows upon the culture of human scale, is accountable to and acceptable only within the bounds of human perception and human apprehension. Such an aesthetic, operating within our sensory limits and attentive to their typical objects, I identify as a centric aesthetic. Once things transcend that scale, up or down, our appreciative powers flicker, our securable outrage flags. But isn't this high arbitrariness?

Is any centric natural aesthetic unavoidably arbitrary simply because it is hitched to our biological limits? It seems so. If we were giants, crushing a rock monument, even a stony moon, would be no more aesthetically offensive than flattening the odd sandcastle is to us now. If our lives were measured in seconds, shattering ice blocks would count as momentarily coarse as using Bryce Canyon as a landfill pit.

If our aesthetic concerns about nature are sensorily parochial, shouldn't we overcome it? If so, this leaves us aesthetically on the point of a plane stretching out indefinitely in all directions. To move to an acentric natural aesthetic is at least to value aesthetically that which cannot derive its value through ordinary sensory experience.

The retort is swift. Surely, our natural aesthetic is, naturally, as anthropocentric as we are human. The charge of arbitrariness is trivial because it infects any unavoidably anthropocentric perspective, even morality. Though it's true that if we had no pain receptors, pulling out someone's fingernails may be no more vicious than giving someone a lousy haircut, this doesn't imply that it can't matter generally if we yank out someone's fingernails. All it does is warn us that we'd best reserve judgment on foreign worlds until we know the facts. Anyway, such anthropocentrism has the appropriateness of necessity. Which sensory perspective can we trade it in for?

This blanket dissolution misses the mark because an obvious arbitrariness emerges within our present limitations. Some find the discrepancy between the human treatment of humans and other animals incomprehensibly capricious. "Because it's just a chicken" doesn't seem, in itself, a morally sanctioned reason for rearing an otherwise autonomous creature in conditions of captivity and then killing her when she becomes large enough to roast. Surely, it is not much more difficult to see that there might be something analogously dissonant within our present natural aesthetic about the co-existence of indifference to the destruction of ice blocks and passionate opposition to the Oldman River Dam project.

Anyway, even if we have to live with what we've got, no one said the perspective must be sensory in the ordinary sense. It is this departure that starts to make of an acentric aesthetic something apart. To be examined are two non-sensory experiential frameworks through which to appreciate Nature: (1) the intellectual-cognitive and (2) the affective-reverential. Both offer rich alternatives, but neither alone is adequate. To these I add the objective-mystical, the view from which no viewer matters at all.

IV. How to Build an Acentric Aesthetic—a Beginner's Guide

If we reckon even an insensate nature has value in itself and not just as habitat or as a source of pleasure, that value must flow from a non-moral source. Rock and ice have no point of view. Any environmentalism focused upon all of nature indiscriminately must be acentric. The nature addressed by this acentric environmentalism is the principal object of an acentric natural aesthetic.⁴ Such an aesthetic cannot itself be humanly parochial because our object is something much bigger and less understandable than we are; hence the place for an acentric natural aesthetic, one that indifferently gives the ice on the Bow a voice with Crater Lake. If this result spells for some a *reductio ad absurdum* for such an environmentalism, it signals for others just how profoundly radical and culturally subversive environmentalism really is.

What might an acentric aesthetic look like? However peculiar such an aesthetic appears, models exist for its foundation. In the remainder, I review two fruitful prospects for an acentric aesthetic, one developed by Allen Carlson, the other by Mark Sagoff. Neither was fashioned for the job I'm advertising, so neither qualifies completely. Still, each suggests how we might break free of our standard scalar limits. I conclude with a third sketch, less intelligible and articulate than those before, but one that is obligingly sensitive to the cardinal credo of any radical and misanthropic environmentalism; namely, that nature is, for us, fundamentally inaccessible and ultimately alien. The two models examined lack this mystery of aloofness, the first full of optimism about our cognitive-epistemological prospects, the second about the power of love and reverence.

Biomorphic Stretch: Rights, Quasi-Persons & the Kingdom of Ends: Before proceeding, another view, albeit odd, merits a glance. One way to ensure protective regard for the vulnerable against our devices is to declare them the locus of rights. One would suppose, though, that things don't come much more brute than rock and ice, so one would have a tough time finding the fitting criterial nail on which to hang any entitlements. Odd to say, that rock and ice are insensate need not block the extension of rights to them. One philosopher has ensured such a privilege for artworks by classifying them as "quasi-persons," thus securing them membership in the Kingdom of Ends. How else can one characterize how some acts can be affronts against works directly rather than merely indirect indignities against their creators or audiences?⁵ Why not spread round the joy of quasi-personhood to nature generally? Wouldn't this afford all of Creation whatever acentric environmentalism requests?

It's not so easy. The category "quasi-person" seems question-begging and, tactically, must have been introduced just to give the notion of an artwork's "rights" some honorific weight since artworks are decidedly not persons. You cannot just say that because something can be as-if-violated that it is the subject of rights, that it should be so treated. At best, quasi-persons can't have any but quasi-rights. Any quasi-right is a quasi-entitlement. The redrock mesa's quasi-entitlement is to quasi-protection. Would you sleep well at night knowing the quasi-police had your quasi-safety in mind? Quasi-person talk gets quickly out of hand. Are cars quasi-persons insofar as they can be maltreated; for example, by crunching their gears or failing to change the oil regularly? Is a vintage wine a quasi-person just because it can suffer by being excessively chilled or bounced about?

One reprieve is the hint in nature's quasi-personhood of the popular Gaia idea.⁶ Simply put, we are to respect nature in itself because it is, as a whole, a person of sorts, a self-sustaining integrated system with the analogue of needs, growth, personality, health, and the capacity to suffer and to flourish. The Gaia notion is broader than biocentrism because life is just one function contributing to the "wellfare" of the whole.

I am reluctant to invest in such stock. Gaia seems either just another unhelpful biomorphic or, even, anthropomorphic metaphor, or an unwitting celebra-

tion of our own inimitably human obsession with order, economy, organization, system, functionality, hierarchy, cooperation, obedience, and interaction. To paint either picture is to conceive nature as much chummier a place than it is, a place too much like what we know, like, and can control. In a sense, Gaian environmentalism is the moral parallel of centric natural aesthetics; that is, it subsumes the whole within the part, makes of nature a mere patient our medicine can heal. Gaian views seem not so much to reflect nature as to extend wishful fantasies of harmony and interconnectedness. But these hail primordially from our worship of functional human structures—organizations, institutions, corporations—that typify human society and human life. Whoever said nature is a productive factory or a purposive well-balanced corporation in which each hoplite and centurion knows its place? Whoever said nature must have an economy, a sense of thrift and investment? To see it such is to make the world after our own image, an image we understand and appreciate incontestably better than anything else. Something archetypally Romantic haunts such “organic” or “organismic” models.⁷

Though no opportunity for exposition exists here, it is worthwhile to add to the general suspicion that certain basic physical, biological, and geological models are modeled on, and reflective of, more closely understood cultural phenomena and norms. We graft law onto nature as natural law; economy and trade as ecology; progressive change as evolution. This is not the socio-historical hypothesis suggesting that specific historical and cultural episodes spur interest in and give birth to specific types of theory; for example, indeterminacy for uncertain times, uniformitarianism for stable times, etc. Instead, consider the quasi-biological hypothesis that humans in their science, morality, and art make all of nature an expression of generally human normative goals. Nature is either that-to-be-conquered (the Useful, the Knowable) or that-to-be-praised (the Wise, the Perfect). What we win, earn, or learn from nature, what we wonder at is typically what we want (and sometimes get) from ourselves. (For computer fans, appreciate fully the logic of conceiving SimEarth as the sequel to SimCity.)

Suppose we say everything just happens, albeit intelligibly, as repeated pattern and predictability. Do we gain by weaving “balance” and “integrity” into the story? Do these do more explanatory work than merely indicating that whatever is can suffer change if certain other things alter? If we insist that regulation is integral to our account then we really must take nature to be an engine or an organism—anyway, a being inside a plan, a story ordered in time. But isn’t that our story all over again?

Sympathy with metaphor when the going gets dark won’t help either. A Gaian perspective leaves our outlook blinkered for it is unclear whether the Gaian notion is an apt model for everything or, indeed, anything else out there. However system-like the Earth is, however imbued with organismic regulative features, however delicate its balance, these features cannot be extended to nature as a whole for that would amount to extrapolating Gaia to the whole universe. But what is the

“balance” of the universe, what is its economy, its order, its proper state, its health? Nature as a whole is everything out there, and that isn’t any more machine- or organism- or person-like than a molecule. Regarding special cases, what’s the economy of the moon, say, or an asteroid? What are their putative balance and harmony? That we want nature to be intelligible via familiar metaphorical extensions merely tells our story. We have here, at best, a wild inductive fantasy; at worst, hyper-animism gone amuck.

Scientism for Natural Aesthetics—Carlson’s Cognitivism: We are saved from the provinciality of human scale by a familiar enterprise, science, which triumphs over against surface subjectivism. To appreciate nature’s fullest inventory and the natural irrelevance of relative scale, to achieve high objectivity—“the view from nowhere” in Nagel’s wonderful phrase—any natural aesthetic aiming to transcend the more parochial exhibitions of anthropocentrism must embrace not only all creatures great and small but also all processes long and short. How else to confront nature as it is, as a whole? And what better start than with a scientistic natural aesthetic?

Allen Carlson developed such a view not only to “objectify” natural aesthetics but also to furnish it with descriptive categories *sui generis*, which parallel those in cultural aesthetics. At the same time, Carlson transcends immediate experiential limits by urging that our appreciation of nature should be underwritten and even inspired by scientific discoveries. This preferred “environmental model” of natural aesthetics is built upon our understanding nature scientifically:

...to aesthetically appreciate nature we must have knowledge of the different environments of nature and of the systems and elements within those environments. In the way in which the art critic and the art historian are well equipped to aesthetically appreciate art, the naturalist and the ecologist are well equipped to aesthetically appreciate nature ... This knowledge [we have of nature], essentially common sense/scientific knowledge, seems to me the only viable candidate for playing the role in regard to the appreciation of nature that our knowledge of types of art, artistic traditions, and the like plays in regard to the appreciation of art.⁸

The late, very great, Richard Feynman agrees:

Although I might not be quite as refined aesthetically as [an artist], I can appreciate the beauty of a flower. But, at the same time, I see much more in the flower than he sees. I can imagine the cells inside, which also have a beauty. There’s beauty not just at the dimension of one centimetre; there’s also beauty at a smaller dimension ... There are all kinds of intriguing questions that come from a knowledge of science, which only adds to the excitement and mystery and awe of a flower. It only adds. I don’t understand how it subtracts.⁹

Feynman clearly doesn't mean "seeing" literally. Here we have at work the acentrism of sub-surface revelation, science as the impersonal aperceptual avenue to the beauty of Reality, that which underlies and thus eludes the mere artist's sensorium. A.N. Whitehead shares the bluntly Platonic view that sense perception "is very superficial in its disclosure of the nature of things." This makes the artist a mere runner-up at best in providing a basis for a proper appreciation of nature.¹⁰

Since science attaches no privilege to medium-sized hardware nor to the perceptual apparatus of medium-sized perceivers, and is equally (if not more) respectful of the very large, the very small, the very brief, and the very long, it does not offer any basis for aesthetic preference or appreciation on the basis of scale. The scientist's aesthetic perspective thus extends (beyond), if not transcends, the sensuous surface of our common perceptual world. The misgiving that our very physical limitation tacitly establishes and sanctifies such preferences ignores the remarkable power of science to enter into and even manipulate such micro- and macro-worlds.¹¹

A cognitivist aesthetic need not, of course, be grounded in straightforwardly empirical enterprises. The aesthetic of the mathematician or even of the chess player shows how acentrism qua rejection of the sensuous basis of aesthetic judgment can arise. Nor is it fair to say that the mathematician's purely formal aesthetic is somehow parasitic upon, reminiscent of, or derived from, a more fundamental sensuous (centric) aesthetic. Such dependence would have to be shown, and without begging the question.

Such a scientific cognitivism grounding natural aesthetics gives it greater weight than could any reliance upon the sensuous surface; a weight that is measured in relative objectivity, impersonality, distance, and the dismissal of our scalar limits. To distance our appreciation from our immediate natural parochial resources gives this cognitivist aesthetic an acentric aspect. Further, if knowing nature scientifically underwrites the deepest, most genuine, and apposite aesthetic appreciation of what nature really is, what better grounding for a fully comprehensive acentric environmentalism?

Unfortunately, I've some misgivings. However snug we feel in the security of science, I'd hesitate to give over to it too much say over how to approach nature aesthetically. First, if cognitivist aesthetics banks on the presumption of hard truth in science, it must face the challenge of Antirealists, Internal Realists, and Relativists.¹² However controversial such challenges, they raise enough doubt about science as the high road to Reality to weaken any dependence upon science as necessarily revealing anything more deeply for the purposes of aesthetic apprehension than whatever the painter intuitively. Second, the history of science is partially one of rejection, false hopes, vainglorious fantasies. Firm scientific categories have been mistaken; presumed natural kinds never have existed; stock theoretical terms failed to refer; grand theories have withered. Suppose your appreciation of some natural phenomenon rested upon what turned out to be a false scientific theory. What do you suppose would happen? Would your appreci-

ation be dimmed? Would you marvel the less? I certainly hope not. (Shades of the Naturalistic Fallacy.) Third, science discovers natural kinds. Why restrict oneself to an aesthetic slavish to the kinds that science announces? Fallibility aside, it seems unduly dull to follow dutifully after and along with the known. Why not let things “fall together” as they will, as Dickie suggests?¹³ Surely, there is no mission to ape the constricted formality of cultural aesthetics with its types and structures, genres, and styles?

More seriously, we can become dulled by scientific success. How so? The purpose of science—to discover the way the world really is—and its project of uncovering cannot proceed without certain constraints. These include consistency with extant and complementary theories, testability, experimental controllability, coherence with all else that is accepted, and other displays of institutional conformity. The categories of interest to science are those that arise through theorizing and experimentation, description and measurement. Whereas these extend our notion of scale, they do so on our terms, so to speak, and instrumentally. Whatever is acceptable scientifically, must be scientifically apprehendable. And apprehendability requires highly circumscribed constraints. Science is directed to forge a certain kind of intelligibility.

That intelligibility costs. Science de-mystifies nature by categorizing, quantifying, and patterning it. Under those frameworks, science makes intelligible the nature it divides, conquers, and creates in theory. So, the object is still ours in a way; a complex artifact hewn out of the cryptic morass.

This theme of “intelligibility or bust” has a long heritage, finding a powerful classical expression in Kant’s notion of the “finality of nature,” the a priori subjective principle that drives us “to discover in nature an intelligible order ... to make a consistent context of experience ... because only so far as that principle applies can we make any headway in the employment of our understanding in experience or gain knowledge.”¹⁴ A.N. Whitehead echoes the theme:

You cannot talk vaguely about nature in general. We must fix upon details within nature and discuss their essences and their types of interconnection. The world around is complex, composed of details. We have to settle upon the primary types of detail in terms of which we endeavor to express our understanding of nature. We have to analyze and to abstract, and to understand the natural status of our abstractions ... Every age manages to find modes of classification which seem fundamental starting points for the researches of the special sciences. Each succeeding age discovers that the primary classifications of its predecessors will not work.¹⁵

Science ultimately disappoints the acenrtrist because it offers us only a gallery of our own articulated images. Such misgivings bother not only those seeking alternative conceptions of nature but also philosophers of science who question what the sciences, particularly mathematical ones, actually tell us about:

The fundamental laws do not govern reality. What they govern has only the appearance of reality and the appearance is far tidier and more readily regimented than reality itself ... We construct both the theories and the objects to which they apply, then match them piecemeal onto real situations deriving ... a bit of what happens.¹⁶

What is always left behind is the mystery, the ineffability, and the miraculous in nature. For Feynman, science enriches and even deepens one's sense of mystery. However, it may dissatisfy aesthetically in exposing us only to mysteries that science deems to be intrinsically solvable.

Science-centered foundations for natural aesthetics still smack of the acceptance and imposition of implicit functional limits. Scientific activity is not necessarily any less anthropocentric than any other human enterprise. If we look to science to give us those needed categories on which to hang our appreciation, we exchange but one form of human-centered cognition for another.

Surely it is just as much what we don't know and can never know about nature that occasions aesthetic appreciation as anything we've already learned. Science's goal to discover, to reveal and thus to de-mystify runs counter to the perspective of an acentric aesthetic, which maintains a sense of intrinsic mystery, of marvels that no explanatory models can contain. Any natural aesthetic has to respect the inarticulable, which is, after all, the spontaneous voice of wonder.

Science, pursuing nature's foundation, rejects the notion of a systematically incomplete account of nature. The very search for "fundamental" particles, for a final answer to the question "What is the World Made of?" belies a faith in the meaningfulness of structural or ontic ultimacy. Contrast this with the image of worlds within worlds without end captured in fractal ontology where each level reveals as much detail and complexity as the level above; where there are no ultimate simples, no basic constituents, no ontic basement. Such unending depth isn't fully consonant with the world-picture of Feynman. Though in harmony with the appreciation of inner complexity and the anticipation of discovering greater complexity, it isn't clear whether a committed scientist can accept that science reveals no more about the total picture no matter how deep it digs.

Louis MacNeice in "Snow" has a nice feel for the confusion of plenitude:

World is crazier and more of it than we think,
Incorrigibly plural. I peel and portion
A tangerine and spit the pips and feel
The drunkenness of things being various.

Sagoff's Affective-Reverential View—Mother Earth: What's lacking in the scientific regard for nature is heart. Instead of cognitive states, Mark Sagoff draws upon respect, regard, reverence, affection, and love. The unconditional regard flows from an inner attachment to the earth, which Sagoff assimilates to the blood

ties of sympathy and protectiveness we adopt without prompting toward certain of our fellow humans and to our intrinsic cultural and social nature:

Raising children, preserving nature, cherishing art, and practicing the virtues of civil life are all costs—the costs of being the people we are. Why do we pay these costs? We can answer only that these costs are benefits; these actions justify themselves; these virtues are their own reward.¹⁷

The framework, unabashedly affective, appeals to a primordial attachment drawn from our natural relations. This affection, a native and unforced way of reaching out to objects of the world, can extend beyond the locally tribal, a notion reminiscent of Hume's optimism about widening sympathy. Sagoff wants to make a Kantian move in his reference to preserving nature for its own sake—categorically—and his approval of Kant's market price/dignity dichotomy.¹⁸ But, the motive force is not reason alone; it's love. And that's Hume's territory—harnessing the irrational for good.

Blood ties broaden into cultural ties (expressed partially in art preservation) and cultural ties should broaden out further to global environmental ties. If we consider what is lost through the effects of time, artworks are preserved because they are cherished and loved and thus they need have no intrinsically interesting extant characteristics. The value is residual and is sustained even if the work is damaged, as with broken statuary.¹⁹

This affective motif Sagoff extends to provide a ground for protecting the environment as an object of love, reverence, and respect. We respect it veritably as a "fount of all being," "great mother earth." Nature is the Relative of Relatives, or Kin of Kin. This expansion of regard seems to move us effortlessly from the purely aesthetic dimension to the more purposive ethical dimension. The smooth transition is no accident. It is bound by a common force. The carrier wave is our human capacity for affection and respect.

Intriguingly, the affective outlook simulates acentrism through its selfless magnanimity. "Regarding an object with appreciation or with love, we say it has intrinsic value." Not only does this commit us to the non-substitutability (non-transferability) of such individuals; we are further to promote their well being. Regarding nature as having "a health of its own, an integrity," we are to promote these. Because, ironically, love is blind, love is archetypally selfless and universal. Our love for nature transcends human interest. Acentrism is further suggested because the basis for regard need not attach to objects of common perception. Not only does respect transcend changes in the object; it can transcend the human scale even if this involves a move toward the ineffable where love and affection verge upon awe or worship and their concomitant notions of the sacred.

Unlike Carlson's cognitivist aesthetic, Sagoff designed his affective-reverential analysis to justify an environmental ethic. Although he richly complements the epistemic with an elemental non-cognitive affective force underlying our surface responses, the account faces problems.

First and most obviously, such naturalistic foundations must be secure if the view is to have justificatory rather than contingent explanatory force. So long as people really are affectively drawn as suggested, the broadening of respect is but a manifestation of growing appreciation aided by some logical glue appealing to whatever standard of consistency happens to move us. But, if we became otherwise or if we found sufficient excuses to ignore or override impulses we come anyway to suspect, new non-naturalistic arguments to shore up regard would need to be mounted. But what these could rest on primordially, I do not know, unless we revert to some contrived consequentialism, which itself will have to be propped up with a priori warnings about impending catastrophe unless the noble thing is done.

Second, the sense of scale is again limited, and the risk of the parochial ever present. Love, affection, respect, regard—these can be strong but they can be arbitrary and fickle. They are least strong the greater the distance from us, where some intellectual paste—derived ironically from the cognitive side—is needed to cover up our indifference or, worse, revulsion.²⁰ There are some forms of life that, to us, are hideous and frightening, some aspects of terrain that are merely foreboding and dangerous. Why love these when they threaten, or disgust? An appeal to love that survives changes in state of the loved one may get us some way; but, if the love were never there from the start, it needs a proxy to provide whatever defense the selectively primordial but absent regard cannot offer. Sagoff never explains how we get to love something we may fear, unless he counts on our learning to love it. If this doesn't make his account parasitic upon a cognitive approach, it can quickly degenerate into another nasty form of "respecting thine enemy" with its concomitant call to kill with kindness.

Third, Sagoff's imperialism of respect suffers from parochialism. The cognitive view requires that we must know whatever it is we appreciate; the affective view that we respect it. Just as the former leaves no space for the necessity of the unknowable, so the latter cannot accommodate that toward which we have and can have no human or quasi-human relationship. Cognitivism fences in nature as an object (or collection of objects) of human knowledge; affectivism reduces nature to that which falls within the bounds of our reverence. True, nature need not reciprocate (how could it?) but it must be at least affectively palpable, it must meet us in ways that allow us to experience respect. Sagoff leaves no room for a nature for which we have, in principle, no significance. It is that nature—the aloof, the distant, the unknowable, the Other—that eludes the filters of cognitivist and affectivist attempts at contact. The impossibility of contact may be just what it takes to make an acentric natural aesthetic possible. Here we have to compensate for the fullness of epistemic and affective alienation.

Mystery and Insignificance: What compensates? I have rejected attitudes matched with taking nature as a super-person (Gaia), as a harmonious knowable (cognitivism), and as a lovable super-parent (affectivism). As if by remainder, I offer another scrap, sadly obscure, spun off from the sense of mystery upon which

an acentric aesthetic may be built. Related to mystery are the notions of aesthetic aloofness and a sense of insignificance, which comprise the adoption of an acentric perspective. From that perspective one experiences the world from any of an infinite number of points of view from which the viewer and (generalizing by parity) we, do not matter at all. This gives us nature as categorically other than us, a nature of which we never were part, one our appreciation of which acquaints us with the ultimacy of its independence, its autonomy.

If nature as a whole eludes our science and our affection, the only fitting aesthetic regard for it is a sense of mystery. The relevant special sense of mystery is one that cannot have a solution. There is no “cracking” this puzzle, or following that clue. To do either is to lose the absence of focus without which nature cannot be apprehended acentrically. We watch the mystery in a state of appreciative incomprehension, at best an acknowledgement of limits. To grasp the state of mystery one must apprehend the need for a freedom from perspective, sensorial and categorial. This involves appreciating the fundamentally parochial nature of experience, and the invidiously parochial, even incidental, nature of human experience.

Mystery cannot thus be apprehended from within the cognitive-scientific point of view because that demands solution in principle. Science sets out to know with the firm conviction that the goal can somehow be met. Science can’t be a puzzle-solving enterprise without a puzzle, but the puzzle is defined by and within the science. Science generates only questions with potential answers.

Neither can mystery rely upon reverence or respect, love or attachment. These presuppose the power and the opportunity to get close, even to reciprocate—at least to hope such may be possible, as do those who fantasize about living in harmony with nature. We can revere and respect other living things. That’s easy and morally necessary. But nature, the great Insensate, is beyond us, as are those of its ways whereby the only clear picture we have is filtered nomologically as patterned processes, repetition, and obedience to necessity. Art arises partially as an expression of our need and failure to get close.

The mystery invoked is not that which some experience about Life, which, after all, is merely terrestrial so far as we know, and seemingly only a surficial (if not superficial) phenomenon. Ignoring these limits, life is scarcely a thing apart. Indeed, we are acquainted with nothing more intimately. Though it is unfortunate we can’t enter the experiential world of other species, still, we are not at an utter remove. We can relate a little. We can understand their hunger and pain and fear and, at least, opt not to intrude. We share the prejudices of sentience and so can at least understand the natural bias that separates us. This, though, draws us no closer to the silent void of waves and rock and fire. We’re peculiarly ill-equipped to comprehend things without needs, things that cannot be hurt or degraded in the ways we immediately experience. True, habitat can suffer these insults, but necessarily by proxy, habitat being defined by the beings that use it. Habitat is unavoidably hitched to a centric outlook. Terrain is outside all this desperate fuss.

No one can prove that other species are closer to nature than we are. Still, I sus-

pect it because I can't imagine being more distant than we are. Our distance we won for our magnificent success in removing the onus of living with the raw immediacy and vulnerability that seems to typify life on the outside—life we can't live and probably never did except in the nightmares of Hobbes. Properly, the closest contact we can make is in death, but that robs the actor of the play, the audience of the actor.

Perhaps the mystery considered already thrives in religious outlooks. If so, it doesn't match certain conceptions of mystical insight. At least, I reserve judgment about religious and quasi-religious mysticism wherever these summon higher-order hyperbolic epistemic or affective attitudes. Russell, for instance, attributes to mystical insight an epistemological achievement principally yielding "definite beliefs," one that "begins with the sense of mystery unveiled, of a hidden wisdom now suddenly become certain beyond the possibility of a doubt."²¹ The theologian Rudolf Otto emphasizes a powerful quasi-affective bonding as "common to all types of mysticism," which he calls "Identification of the personal self with the transcendent Reality."²² Both strike me as thematic extensions of the scientific search for the secret of the universe and the strong sense of caring relatedness to nature.

Perhaps the sense of mystery is just a religious surrogate. If so, we might re-evaluate the faded star of sublimity, described by Thomas Weiskel as "a massive transposition of [religious] transcendence into a naturalistic key."²³ But the sublime falls short in its very definiteness. Traditional notions of the sublime incorporated feelings of fear or a sense of being overwhelmed or a discovery of the nobility and complexity of the human mind. Mystery, however, requires nothing of terror or terrible pleasure, of power, or of oceanic vastness. Nor does it promise promotion to high moral consciousness or guide a tour through the infinity of inner mental space. Although some sentiments may overlap—consider those linked to Otto's *mysterium tremendum*—none meets appropriately the qualities of aloofness and impersonality. In any event, the sublime remains too weighed down with a tradition too ready with recipes for the essence of sublimity.²⁴

Nor does the mystery necessarily involve simple awe and wonder. These are bred from the same stock as love and respect, and come with a kindred fickleness and arbitrariness of scale. If an acentric environmentalism is possible, it requires a regard much more uniform than these sorts of affects ensure, one typified precisely by the dissolution of human perspective, which levels to an anonymous indifference (uniformity) the vantage points of those adopting the stance. Thus it effectively renders all viewers and viewpoints indistinguishable and fosters in turn a sense of consistent universal insignificance, one that is not brightened by a positive, enriching sense of the endlessness of nature. Awe, in any case, is unavoidably self-centered. To appreciate nature acentrically, one must avoid being impressed or overwhelmed by it. Such states of awe presuppose that we bring a human self-image into the experience comparatively, thereby appointing ourselves benchmarks of the amazing.

What regard, then, can we have for nature? What constitutes an acentric aesthetic? The notion of mystery required must serve on the side of the Subject and the Object: the aesthetic attitude that properly fits the aesthetic object. The only way we achieve, if at all, the requisite attitude is through a sense of being outside, of not belonging. This flows in part from our sensory nature, which forces us to have a perspective, a view from somewhere that gives us position in space and time, and so draws us into the notion that spatio-temporality must be the ultimate glue of things. But this false necessity of locus is the limitation that sensing creatures endure, distracting them from apprehending proper impersonality, true indifference and autonomy that are nature's principal marks. Locus defines our humanity and the way it copes with life by transmuting rigorously whatever is external to it into manipulable experience.

There are infinitely many points of view from which we do not matter at all. To apprehend nature acentrically is to adopt any such point of view and thus attain aesthetic aloofness. That any such vantage point counts should dispel the suspicion that one must attain a God's-eye view of nature. If only one could "see" with a beetle's eye one would have done nearly enough, for then, at least, the world viewed couldn't be for us.²⁵ This outlook is not associated with scientific impartiality because it has no ordained agenda nor any dictate to meet successfully conventions of intelligibility. Nor is aloofness the same as aesthetic disinterestedness, although the former requires the latter. Aloofness is more detached, distant, than disinterestedness. It calls not only for the removal from experience of all functional and personal considerations of the object, but all limiting scalar (e.g., sensuous) ones as well. To achieve aesthetic aloofness is to disavow any preference for customary surface perception in the aesthetic because it is precisely that avenue of apprehension that is manifestly a victim of scale, an emphatic expression of culture. Of course, our very human nature works against any such scale-neutral acentrism. We can see only so much, feel only thus-and-so, live only so long.

This may make acentric natural aesthetics impossible, paradoxical. If it is possible, it leaves room open only for mysteries without solution. If we acknowledge such mysteries, we approach natural appreciation, but not through forms of cognitive anchorage nor through the warmth and security of respect and affection. Nature is aloof, and in this aloofness we come, not so much to understand or revere, as to attempt to mirror or match, and thus to grasp without capture.

That aloofness is linked to disinterestedness and that it functions as the fitting attitude toward nature as a whole lends support to the claim that acentrism is genuinely an aesthetic rather than a moral or a religious outlook, though the boundaries between these may seem obscure and even trivial. In any event, as an aesthetic, acentrism distances itself from the cultural domain, which has as its focus those archetypal playthings of culture—works of art—which are the most arch of artifacts, made-things, human-things.²⁶

Notes

- 1 Nicholas Rescher proposes such a view in *Unpopular Essays on Technological Progress* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980). More recently, Mark Sagoff urges a similar view in "Zuckerman's Dilemma: A Plea for Environmental Ethics," *Hastings Center Report* 21 (1991): 32-40.
- 2 These themes are further developed in Stan Godlovitch, "Disposing of the Past," read at the Alberta Philosophers' Conference, Kananaskis Country, April 1989.
- 3 See Allen Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1979): 267-276 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 2]; also "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment, and Objectivity," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 40 (1981): 15-27.
- 4 In "Aesthetic Protectionism," *The Journal of Applied Philosophy* 6 (1989): 171-180, I argue that an aesthetic regard for nature cannot support a protectionist ethic because the principal focus of the aesthetic outlook has to be that which appeals to us. My target there is the anthropocentric focus in natural aesthetics, which necessarily under-values the natural (intrinsic autonomy, otherness) in nature whenever natural appeal is under threat. So, it may be thought aesthetically better that a world with more especially colorful ducks exist than one with more drab ones. Such leads to making room for the color by thinning out the drab. This I likened to curatorship.
- 5 Alan Tormey, "Aesthetic Rights," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 32 (1973): 163-170.
- 6 The classic sources are James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) and *The Ages of Gaia* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988).
- 7 For example, see Evelleen Richards, "'Metaphorical Mystifications': The Romantic Gestation of Nature in British Biology," in *Romanticism and the Sciences*, eds. A. Cunningham and N. Jardine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 130-143.
- 8 Allen Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," p. 273 [this volume, p. 71-72]. See also Allen Carlson, "Nature and Positive Aesthetics," *Environmental Ethics* 6 (1984), especially, pp. 30-32: "The nature and extent of positive aesthetics [i.e., that virgin nature is essentially beautiful] which is justified seemingly depends upon interpretations of science."
- 9 Richard P. Feynman, *What Do You Care What Other People Think?* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988) p. 11. Thanks to Glenys Godlovitch for bringing this passage to my attention.
- 10 A.N. Whitehead, *Nature and Life* [1934] (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), Lecture I.
- 11 Cf. Ian Hacking, *Representing and Intervening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- 12 Cf. Bas Van Fraassen, *The Scientific Image* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), and standard works by Kuhn and Feyerabend.

- 13 George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p.169.
- 14 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* [1790], trans. J.C. Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 25-26. See also, F.X. Coleman, *The Harmony of Reason* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974), pp. 8-9.
- 15 Whitehead, *Nature and Life*, p. 1.
- 16 Nancy Cartwright, *How the Laws of Physics Lie* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.162. Cartwright thinks theory construction can be fraught with a kind of epistemic tunnel-vision. See also Anthony O'Hear, *Philosophy of Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 129 ff.
- 17 Sagoff, "Zuckerman's Dilemma," p. 37.
- 18 See Sagoff, "Zuckerman's Dilemma," p. 39.
- 19 Sagoff developed these themes in a talk delivered at the American Society for Aesthetics meeting in Kansas City, October 1987. Among other things, he pointed out that artworks though terribly commonplace are treated as if they were precious rarities. Storage sites bulge with undisplayed works, works that there is no opportunity to display. Why keep them at all? he asks. Because they are part of us, like old relatives, he replies.
- 20 Nor should we ever forget Adam Smith's harshly sobering reflections upon what exactly gets us worked up most. Cf. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1759], eds. D. Raphael and A. Macfie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 136-137.
- 21 Bertrand Russell, "Mysticism and Logic," in *Mysticism and Logic* [1917] (London: Allen and Unwin, 1963), p. 14.
- 22 Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* [1917], trans. J.W. Harvey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), p. 36.
- 23 Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 4. Again, "the Sublime revives as God withdraws from an immediate participation in the experience of men" (p. 3).
- 24 The sublime, once a prominent topic, may simply have drowned in a soup of obscurity. Mary Mothersill remarks that "at one time the sublime picked out a constellation of feelings, expressions, style, and sensibility that everyone recognized as having some internal affinity. Then ... it all came apart.... The ingredient elements persist. Nature unimproved, the wilderness inspires enthusiasm and awe but does not evoke thoughts of the Categorical Imperative. Its moral burden is limited to 'environmental ethics' ('Woodsman, spare that tree')." "Review of Crowther, *The Kantian Sublime*," *Mind* 101 (1992): 156-60, p. 160. Classical 18th century sources include Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* [1759] and Kant's neo-Romantic *Critique of Judgement* [1790]. Wordsworth brought to full flower the Romantic sublime. See Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, and M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971). The full confusion is elegantly and sympathetically reviewed in E.F. Carritt, *The Theory of Beauty* [1949] (London: Methuen, 1962), Chapter IX. Serious recent discussions include Guy Sircello, *A New Theory of Beauty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), Section 28 and Guy Sircello, "How is a Theory of the Sublime Possible?"

The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 51 (1993); also Paul Crowther, "The Aesthetic Domain: Locating the Sublime," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 29 (1989): 21-32, and Paul Crowther, *The Kantian Sublime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

- 25 Kafka's Gregor Samsa, condemned to an alienating metamorphosis, is doomed never to make it. The incredible shrinking hero of *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, Director: Jack Arnold, Screenplay: Richard Matheson (1957), gets closer as he heads at the stretch for the infinitesimally small which, lo, turns out to offer the viewpoint of viewpoints, rather, a view from everywhere (The apotheosis of the Absolute Boom Shot). Much more modestly and quite within the club, an adult may learn a little about a different world simply by stooping down to the height of a child and watching.
- 26 Versions of this paper were presented at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, and at the American Society for Aesthetics, Pacific Division Meeting, Asilomar. I have benefited from comments by Allen Carlson, Hilda Hein, Thom Heyd, Tom Leddy, Stephanie Ross, Roger Shiner, Guy Sircello, and Bob Stecker.

Landscape and the Metaphysical Imagination

Ronald Hepburn



I.

What is it to appreciate a landscape aesthetically? As several recent writers have claimed, it may be an experience within which many layers can be distinguished. The purely sensory component—colors, shapes, sounds, tactile sensations, smells—seldom if ever exists on its own; for we know that area of blue to be the blue of the sky, that broken disc to be a reflection, in nearly still water, of the moon, that object by the dried up lake to be the skull of a sheep or goat. We conceptualize, we recognize, we add context, background, seek out formal relationships—reflectively.¹ Furthermore, we may see not simply a large and very dark cloud, just above the horizon, but see it as an ominous harbinger of a severe storm, threatening the still bright but fragile scene in the middle distance. There we have expressive properties, and the thought of changes over time—even a kind of drama. One layer more: we may experience a polar scene of ice and snow as revealing something fundamental (and no doubt grim) about how things really, or ultimately, are: something concealed from us in more familiar, temperate, farmed countryside. Or, in sharpest contrast, we may experience a nature whose poignant beauty on some occasion seems to speak of a transcendent Source for which we lack words and clear concepts.

In these last two instances, we have what I want to call “metaphysical imagination.” We see the landscape as ominous, cosmically ominous, or as revealing-concealing a still greater beauty than its own. In a word, then, the many-leveled structure of aesthetic experience of nature can include great diversity of constituents: from the most particular—rocks, stones, leaves, clouds, shadows—to the most abstract and general ways we apprehend the world, the world as a whole.

In what follows, I shall try, first of all, to clarify and develop the central concept of metaphysical imagination and its place in aesthetic experience of nature; secondly, to draw attention to a tendency among a number of philosophers today to underestimate the interest, importance, and diversity of the contributions of metaphysical imagination to the aesthetic experience of landscape. Next, we need to acknowledge that the opposite mistake can also be made: that of attributing exces-

sive authority and revelatory power to metaphysical imagination. Fourthly: keeping, I hope, between these extremes of deficiency and excess, I shall try to explore the range of metaphysical imagining in relation to landscape appreciation. Last of all, we shall look briefly at a sample of difficult but fascinating cases, where it is hard to discern what *are* the metaphysical-imaginative components of a particular experience, and whether they are, or ever could be, articulated in coherent philosophical theory.

First, then, to fill out the concept of metaphysical imagination. I shall take it to be an element of interpretation that helps to determine the overall experience of a scene in nature. It will be construed as a “seeing as ...” or an “interpreting as ...” that has metaphysical character, in the sense of relevance to the whole of experience and not only to what is experienced at the present moment. Metaphysical imagination connects with, looks to, the “spelled out” systematic metaphysical theorizing that is its support and ultimate justification. But also it is no less an element of the concrete present landscape experience: it is fused with the sensory components, not a meditation aroused by these.

Of course the total experience may *prompt* meditation. In particular, it may prompt one to ask whether this “vision” of nature can be argued for systematically, and “inhabited” as one’s settled view of the world. Or, we ask, is it no more than one way that nature can, on occasion, present itself to us; but a fanciful, not a sustainable vision? Indeed the Coleridgean distinction between imagination and fancy can be put to use here, precisely to distinguish an instance of metaphysical imagination that connects with theory that is sustainable and permits of coherent and convincing development, from the fugitive and (it may be) ultimately incoherent interpretation of “fancy.” That is to say, it looks as if we may value the sustainable, not only as the dependably enjoyable, but as having the best claim to be true.

We want our experience to be of *nature as it really is*, not merely to consist of agreeable sensory stimuli or reverie. It often does matter to us that nature actually presents itself with the features to which we are responding. When I mistake a massive cumulus cloud on the horizon for a distant, immense, snowy mountain range, I feel an inner obligation to downgrade the experience that my misperception has momentarily evoked. That is not simply because the experience was fleeting and, once re-interpreted, can no longer be recovered. Many highly valued aesthetic experiences of nature are fleeting and unrepeatable, but are not on that account downgraded.

I seem to discern a relevant difference here between attitudes to art and to aesthetic appreciation of nature. In the case of art, we accept that artists may see part of their task in a landscape painting as the aesthetic assimilating of human artifacts, industrial objects like pipelines, or a power station on an estuary, or a “wind-farm” on a hilltop—drawing these into the world of their paintings. Why is it quite different (for many people) with the aesthetic appreciation of nature, when they feel revulsion at the slicing of a down, let us say, by a motorway cutting? There may be more than one reason. It may be the intrusion of the manipulatory, the will-

ful, the commercial, into what one had hoped would be a meditative release from all instrumentality, or, in Schopenhauerian terms, from all will and willing. A small intrusion can be enough to evoke the dejected, if exaggerated, sense that *there is no escape from the technological*. But there may often be also another factor: that where technology threatens to modify or to dominate nature, we sense that we are so much the less likely to discern in that landscape the fundamental properties (whether comfortable, exhilarating, or desolate) of actual nature, and that, here at least, we shall be frustrated in that cognitive, sometimes metaphysical, endeavor.

Of course, I acknowledge that not by any means all aesthetic enjoyment of nature has this “realist,” cognitivist orientation. The emphasis may fall much more heavily on “immediacy,” on the impact of sensory elements and their enjoyment; and that can be a splendid source of delight, though it is not my present topic.

II.

Why should metaphysical imagination be under-acknowledged today? I suspect that some of the undervaluers may wish to keep their own account of aesthetic engagement with nature well free of the embarrassment of what they see as the paradigm case of metaphysics in landscape. I mean Wordsworthian romanticism, with its

sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky and in the mind of man.²

Embarrassment, because this is taken to express a religious experience whose object is very indeterminate, whose description virtually fails of distinct reference, and which may lack adequate rational support. Also the experience alluded to may have only a fugitive and tenuous hold on the person who has it.³ But my response to that is not to urge an aesthetic experience of nature *free* of metaphysics, for that would be grossly self-impoverishing, but rather to encourage a recognition of its endless *variety*. What comes to replace a theistic or pantheist vision of nature may well itself have the status of metaphysics—naturalistic, materialistic, or whatever—and may have its own metaphysical-imaginative correlatives.

There are other strands to this underplaying of the role of metaphysical imagination. A person may indeed acknowledge a thought-component in aesthetic experience of nature and may see that as seriously concerned with the disclosure of truth. Truth may be taken to lie—predominantly or exclusively—in the *scientific* understanding of nature, and in landscape appreciation that will be the imagining of evolutionary, geological, meteorological settings of the visible scene, and the

causal processes that produced it.⁴ Now, I can only agree that these factors may be relevant and may enter and enhance appreciation; but I cannot agree that they have an authority such that they ought (in our contemporary climate of thought) to *supplant* other elements. For science does not oust metaphysics: the questions of metaphysics arise on and beyond the boundary of science. They may receive naturalistic answers, or speculative answers centering, for instance, on the “anthropic principle,” the “fine tuning” of the universe, which alone could have yielded the conditions for life and consciousness to emerge, or answers that bring out the incompleteness of all scientific explanation and the *nisus* towards a completion or fulfillment of the world’s processes in an Absolute or in God. Such metaphysical theorizing is not *in lieu* of science, but seeks to delineate the wider context in which science itself has its place.

I would argue against a one-sidedly science-dominated appreciation of nature on other grounds also. Science, rightly and necessarily, gives precedence to objectivizing movements of mind, probes behind the human perspective, with its phenomenal properties, abstracts from our emotion- and value-suffused, perceptually selective, view of the world, and works ultimately towards a mathematically quantifiable and imperceptible reality. In the course of that abstraction, most or all of the features of the world that are of human concern are eliminated. Yet the very pursuit of that scientific enterprise has dynamics that belong only within the human life-world, the world of perception and feeling, curiosity and striving to know, and vanish in the objective view. The aesthetic mode of experience, the development of which is a very different enterprise indeed from that of science, far from admitting a *nisus* to leave the subjective, human perceptual, evaluative, and emotional experience, seeks to explore it and intensify it. And, crucially, the aesthetic appreciating of nature—notably of landscape—is a prime means of enriching that experience, increasing our powers of discrimination, as members of the life-world: a world that has as great a claim to reality as the world of the physicist. Some thought-elements concerning the geological past of the region we contemplate or some thought of the ecological unity of its plants and animals may well enter and enhance our experience. But we are under no rational imperative to allow the scientific to displace the human perspective or to play down the centrality of that perspective to any experience that can be called aesthetic.

III.

I turn now to the dangers of the opposite extreme: the *over*-valuing of the metaphysical imagination, the exaggeration of its authority. The possibility of such over-valuing is easily established. Just as occasionally the images of our dreams may have a strongly and puzzlingly “revelatory” quality to the dreamer, so too some experiences of landscape may seem peculiarly revealing about the nature of reality as a whole. A useful term for such a felt revelatory character is “noetic quality” (used, in aesthetics, by Harold Osborne). But it is a quality that, though phe-

nomenologically vivid, cannot be allowed infallibility. It can attach to contradictory “revelations.” Idyllic, formally magnificent nature now seems to witness to a benign, intelligible source of its ordered beauty; but then desert or wilderness nature may seem, no less strikingly, to proclaim its unconcern for any value.

Mary Warnock has discussed theories of imagination in its many forms and manifestations.⁵ While not unaware of its limitations, she accepts an essentially Romantic conception of imagination and its products as “in some sense” true. Imagination is “that by which, as far as we can, we see into the life of things”; or, it is “ability to see through objects ... to what lies behind them.” It is through the power of imagination that we have “intuition of the infinite and inexpressible significance of the ordinary world.”

These remarks, intriguing though they are, leave me uneasy, since they do seem to invite us to give metaphysical-religious imagination too much independent authority, and they carry a risk of losing from sight its ability to render equally vivid quite incompatible views of the world. If, for instance, the theistic metaphysical imagination is to be taken as true, may we not also require, as a condition of our confidence in it, a background of sound theistic metaphysical argument and theory? Can anything less than that justify the move from noetic quality to noesis in the full sense—a knowledge claim about how the world ultimately is?

IV.

I stand before a landscape in early summer. I see everywhere the fresh green of new leaves, the pink and white of blossom: there is bird song, insect life teeming, a warming sun, and a scatter of innocent clouds. Resurgence, lushness, fecundity. My only thought-component (if it can be called that) is “*Enjoy this, here, now!*”

A friend standing beside me, contemplating the same landscape, modifies her experience with a differently toned thought-component. “Brilliant: but it is no more than a short interlude between the inertness of winter and the decay of autumn.” It is easy to suppose this latter thought-component modulating and intensifying into a related and more clearly metaphysical-imaginative one. “Brilliant indeed: but deceptive! Set this landscape in the wider context of space and of time, and the reality shows itself—life’s resurgence as ephemeral and fragile: the wider cosmic context as one in which life cannot be sustained save in conditions of the utmost rarity.” So a poignancy—and a threatened, even doomed quality—is imparted to the present aesthetic experience of a landscape in early summer.

Suppose now that my own experience becomes increasingly metaphysical-imaginative. If spelled out, my (more optimistic) thought-component might amount to something like this: “Here indeed is nature showing its real self—always, and fundamentally, fecund. Its wintry inertness is no more than quiescence—the condition for ever more resurgence. Even the vastness of circumambient space and its hugely dispersed occupants are the necessary and therefore benign conditions of the life we now enjoy and contemplate here in this landscape.

Here and now these conditions are concretely and gloriously fulfilled.” Of course, and once again, what I am thus “spelling out” is ingredient in my experience, not as propositions of scientific cosmology or metaphysical theory, but as the “posture of consciousness” (*Bewusstseinslage*), to which they condense.⁶ That is a present reality and is a determinant of my total exultant experience.

I have taken the examples of fecundity, regeneration, vitality, and their opposites, partly because they connect with an earlier opposition in the history of ideas—ideas philosophical and theological. Going back to the biblical sources: I am thinking of that strand in Christian thinking that posited a falling away not just of humanity but of nature more broadly from its first unspoiled state. After humanity’s Fall, the entire world is inclement, hard to cultivate, inhospitable. There has been *cosmic* damage, *Cosmic Fall*.⁷ Even if it was agreed that in some way the visible world was an image of eternity, there was serious and long-standing division between those who declared it too deeply flawed to be properly enjoyed as such, and those in the same tradition who had no difficulty in seeing past the flaws to the divine archetype.

Clearly there is a spectrum here between two poles of aesthetic response to landscape. At the one pole, we are content with discerning expressive quality at an instant, and at the other, we apply the imaginative schema of a presupposed metaphysical theory, characterizing the world on a huge spatial and temporal scale. Between them lies a variety of intermediate possibilities. These may involve visions that *foreshadow* a later theoretical elaboration, perhaps furnishing its first vivid and germinal coming-to-consciousness. The packed plenum of plant and animal life (say, in a tropical rain forest) may be taken as a fecundity to be rejoiced in or (more in the spirit of J-P. Sartre than of G.M. Hopkins) as a display of suffocating, “absurd,” over-abundance. Or the mutual predatoriness of the species before us may seem to intimate what Hume’s “Philo” characterized as a “blind nature, impregnated by a great vivifying principle, and pouring forth from her lap, without discernment or parental care, her maimed and abortive children.”⁸ Imaginative foreshadowings of such cosmologies, theistic, absurdist, Dionysian, we can think of as expressions we read on the “face of nature”—expressions we can both aesthetically enjoy, and seek (as a different task) to decipher.

Now, cases like those we have just instanced involve the importing into aesthetic experience of metaphysical-imaginative components quite distinct from anything actually present in the scene itself. These were components (“accounts”) derived, e.g., from the belief that humanity’s disobedience brought about cosmic cataclysm. We could say that such an added metaphysical thought-component is *externally related* to whatever scene is being contemplated. In other cases, the metaphysical-imaginative schema is better described as *internal* to the appreciative experience itself, since it is concerned, perhaps, with the relation between subject and object, the relation between appreciator and landscape, or it may be with some high-level significance that is read off particular *formal* features of the scene.

Either we do not have an account (story, doctrine, theory) to import schematically into the experience, or the experience itself generates what may *become* an account.

A related distinction can be made immediately. The last set of examples had their basis in *concrete* features of landscape—regeneration, fecundity, or desolation and decay. Other exercises of metaphysical imagination, in contrast, can have a much more abstract focus, and could be described as the instantiation in experience of what may be formal, and certainly will be fundamental, metaphysical notions. For an example of what I have in mind, consider the sense of being “one with nature.” That clearly does focus on the relationship itself, between appreciator and landscape appreciated. And from the point of view of the second distinction just made (i.e., concrete/abstract), oneness is or can be as good an example of an abstract metaphysical concept as one could wish! Recent discussions have acknowledged the importance of this theme, but have seldom (I think) done justice to it.

What, then, can it mean to be one with nature? Well, when we speak of oneness with nature we may simply be meditating on the numerous common properties that we share with the nature we contemplate: we are ourselves in the scene and bodily continuous with it. Its life is our own life: we breathe its air; we are warmed, sustained by a common sun.

A distinguishable, and more distinctively aesthetic, variant is the contemplating of perceptible analogies between our life and that of the scene before us: branching stem and leaf patterns and the branching of our blood vessels; gentle rhythm of calm waves up the beach and the rhythm of calm breathing. Here, oneness with nature *is* the aesthetic enjoyment of such chiming, resonating, reconciling, rhyming forms: much more than an intellectual recognition of them.

An emotionally intense form of oneness with nature can center upon a heightened sense of our limited life span through the vivid realizing of our integration with the continuum of living forms. The emotional quality may be of an enhanced acceptance and resignation—nature and the observer united in a single manifestation of life-and-inevitable-death.

Yet another way of being one with nature is to experience a sense of *equilibrium*: a suspension of conflict with nature, of threat, even of causal engagement. Metaphysical imagination may see these occasions as, once more, poignant brief realizations of an equilibrium that cannot be read as a goal, a *telos*, of the world’s processes. Maybe it is seen as an equilibrium achieved *in spite of* the blind and non-rational powers that determine the way the world goes.

A still more intense realization of the metaphysical-imaginative annexing of “oneness” is the nature mystic’s, when it seems to him or her that the subject-object distinction is overcome, and the God-world distinction no less annulled. Oneness here can be the oneness of monistic metaphysics, or of pantheism—all is in God. So, for instance, Wordsworth wrote of the

...one interior life
 That lives in all things ...
 In which all beings live with God, themselves
 Are God, existing in the mighty Whole,
 As indistinguishable as the cloudless East
 At noon is from the cloudless West, when all
 The hemisphere is one cerulean blue.⁹

In this illustration of “oneness”—with its several variants—I have been implicitly introducing yet a third distinction, of degrees of intensity, at the pole of which an experience *centers upon* the metaphysical-imaginative component, is dominated by it, as happens most thoroughly in the nature-mystical experiences. Although, obviously, each level of intensity may sustain an aesthetic experience of distinct and individual value to its subject, I suspect that (on occasion) some of the value attached to less explicitly mystical versions is derived from the more metaphysical-religious forms. There are cases in recent (and secular) literature, where it is difficult, otherwise, to account for the awed solemnity that clearly attaches, for the writer, to the experience he or she describes as unity with nature. Among these, there may well be a number in which the writer would not confidently assent to the underlying implied metaphysics of mysticism. This is an instance of a particularly perplexing and intriguing set of questions—questions about a person’s “entitlement,” as it were, to aesthetic experiences of nature whose metaphysical-imaginative component rests on theoretical presuppositions that cannot perhaps be met.

My next example also illustrates that spectrum from less to greater centrality of metaphysical-imaginative components in aesthetic experience. It is also an example of what I called “high-level significance” read into the formal features of a scene, where that contribution is potentially a thoroughly abstract metaphysical notion. Nevertheless, if the experience is to be aesthetic, it too must be anchored in the concrete, perceptually given. (We could take this to illustrate a further kind of “equilibrium.”)

In a book called *The Making of Landscape Photographs*, the author describes a scene and reproduces a photograph of it, a scene with bright yellow autumn larch trees in a valley with hills on both sides and in the misty far distance. The brightness of the yellow trees suggests that they are directly and vividly sun-lit, but they are not: the light in fact is “flat and diffused.” The effect is “full of two contradictory things: calm and excitement ... drama and ease.” This “must be the source of the pleasure” given by the scene.¹⁰

“Calm and excitement”—a paradoxical union. Tranquillity-with-vitality, unchanging form sustained by intense manifestation of energy: there are many variants. I think of Wordsworth on the “stationary blasts of waterfalls,” and of the “tumult and peace” he saw in an alpine landscape (*The Prelude*, VI). I think of Ruskin on the part played in natural beauty by what he described as “the connec-

tion of vitality with repose.” “Repose,” he claimed, “demands for its expression the implied capability of its opposite, Energy.” “Repose proper, the *rest* of things in which there is *vitality* or capability of motion ...:” for example, a “great rock come down a mountain side, ... now bedded immovably among the fern.” Its “stability” is “great in proportion” to the “power and fearfulness of its motion.”¹¹ In my own view, the co-presence of these opposites, life and stillness, constitutes a fundamental, and too little recognized, key concept for aesthetic theory.

Again, we can place such cases on a spectrum from near absorption in the concrete particularities of a scene (the motionless yet intensely alive individual tree branch) to awareness of the full metaphysical extrapolation to which the schema of “calm and vital,” “intensely still and intensely alive” lends itself. At the extreme point, those near opposites appear in some memorable accounts of metaphysical perfection: God as the being who is unmoved, all-sufficient, in eternal repose and who is yet at the same time life at its infinite intensity.¹² As a commentator on Aquinas put it: “The divine stillness is the immobility of perfection, not imperfection: of full activity, not inertia.”¹³ Or looking back to the sixth-century Pseudo-Dionysius: “In his eternal motion, God remains at rest.”¹⁴ Our normal expectation is that increasing stillness means decreasing vitality, and that what enhances life will do so at the expense of tranquillity. But these are cases where both those highly valued modes of experience are in some measure simultaneously secured, and the thought of their complete, full conjunction in deity can be taken either as true of an actual God, or at the least as marking an *ideal focus*.¹⁵ Which of these options we take to be the truth will, without doubt, make a real difference to the metaphysical-imaginative component available to us in relevant aesthetic experiences. And a third distinct possibility is that we cannot determine which ultimate option is the case—whether the focus is actual or ideal.

V.

That thought again anticipates my final topic. It is by no means always obvious exactly what presuppositions are being hinted at by the metaphysical imagination; and sometimes hard to tell whether a presupposed metaphysical view, if elaborated, would be fully coherent. Yet again we may wonder whether the spectator is entitled in consistency to draw upon certain presuppositions that clearly are being imported, imaginatively, into his or her experience. We also have to distinguish two importantly different possibilities:

- (i) There are cases where a particular metaphysical-imaginative “slant” can do its work of enhancing our total aesthetic experience of landscape—even though the systematic metaphysical or theological theory it presupposes (of which it could be called a “schema”—in a sense distantly derived from Kant) cannot be shown, by reasoning, to be true, or indeed fully coherent as an account of reality. As I have said, “vitality-and-stillness” could be such a principle: signaling

various approaches or approximations to an ideal, but an ideal that may be nowhere and never fully actualized.

(ii) In a second group of cases, failure at the theoretical, metaphysical level does threaten to undermine the associated metaphysical-imaginative component. The confident invalidating of all cosmological argumentation from the world to God, and a view of a world/God relation as incoherent, would surely be incompatible with a vision of landscape as depending wholly, moment-to-moment, on a divine sustaining, an incessant checking of what otherwise would be its lapse into non-being.

On the other hand, the fact that there are good reasons for rejecting a dogmatic metaphysical skepticism leaves open the fascinating alternative possibility, namely that the aesthetic experience may keep alive some view of the world that the concepts of systematic metaphysical thought cannot precisely articulate, nor its arguments support. (Analogously, the fact that we have no satisfactory account of the relation between body and mind may mean that we lack the necessary concepts to make it intelligible; but certainly does not compel us to deny our experience of both!) Similar alternatives confront us in seeking to interpret our experience of *awe*. If we acknowledge that awe is “dread mingled with veneration,” “reverential wonder” (*Oxford English Dictionary*), do we have somehow to negate our experience of awe (or downgrade it from the domain of imagination to that of fancy), supposing that our reflectively endorsed inventory of the world includes no objects in external nature fitting to venerate, though doubtless plenty to dread? Could the continuing experience of awe itself call in question that inventory, or would it merely display a vestigial and no longer appropriate religio-aesthetic response?

Nowhere are these kinds of uncertainty and ambiguity more dramatically displayed than in the extraordinary history of the concept of *sublimity*. Mention of “awe” has brought us close to it. The concept of sublimity was fashioned in response to a need—a need to name a memorable, powerful, and perplexing range of experiences, which were of undoubted aesthetic value, yet were not experiences of beauty as understood in neoclassical aesthetic theory. They combined, or fused, dread at the overwhelming energies of nature and the vastnesses of space and time with a solemn delight or exhilaration. Landscapes, notably, could evoke such experiences—and alpine travelers were among the first who struggled to describe them. The exhilaration was hard to account for and was explained in very different ways, many of which involved an essentially metaphysical-imaginative component. Kant’s version balanced the fearful, imagination-boggling element with the thought of the subject’s own rational, free moral selfhood, distinct from (and incommensurable with) the mere spreadoutness and brute force of physical nature. In other versions, the dreadful was checked by the spectator’s awareness of his or her own—at least temporary—safety, or by the exhilarating realization that we are able to take up a contemplative, distancing attitude to the menacing and the hostile. Other theorists again were even more speculatively buoyant, rejoicing in the

capacity of the mind or soul to “be present” (in some necessarily undefined sense!) to the remotest parts of the universe, or equating our perception of the cosmos with an interiorizing of its vastnesses. Some of these materials continue to be reworked in our own day, though in ways often very remote from their first deployment—and even more remote from our present concern in this essay.¹⁶

It is reasonable, and tempting, to see the history of theories of the sublime as no more than a story of successive attempts to categorize, in different philosophical idioms, experiences of overlapping but not at all unified or converging kinds; moreover, the eventual popularity—even cult—of the sublime ensured that it was generalized and vulgarized. Nevertheless, the historian of the sublime, Samuel Monk, could speak of sublimity as a “rare” experience, and I think myself that it is still seriously possible to look on a substantial set of recorded experiences of the sublime as having a phenomenological center, approached but never altogether captured by aesthetic theorizing, despite all its variety. That would be to see the sublime as naming an elusive but momentous core experience (a close neighbor of Rudolf Otto’s “numinous” experience, as Otto acknowledged at one stage of his thinking), defying efforts to pin it down philosophically. All the accounts distort or “hijack” the developing experience so as to make of it something other than it “wants” to become: or they fail to “tune” it in a way that seems authentic or faithful.

As critical philosophers, we may see ourselves as under an intellectual obligation to turn away from such experience, deeming it to be strictly “unavailable,” since its history is no more than the history of failed attempts to make philosophical sense of it. Alternatively, we may judge ourselves obliged, rather, to remain open to the experience, and to see it as continuing to challenge us to make sense of its presuppositions—elusive as they are: we are obliged, that is, to be both open and critical.

In any case, it is not impossible at least to indicate in what respects a given theory of sublimity *fails* to capture, or distorts, the central experience: critical reason is not wholly at a loss. We may criticize Edmund Burke for understanding sublimity too much in terms of fear—ordinary and untransmuted; or criticize Kant for downgrading nature’s contribution in favor of the one-sided exalting of the rational subject-self. One or other of the rough approximations may suffice, for the susceptible, to evoke or trigger the experience in vivid memory.

Undoubtedly, one way of making (partial) sense of it is theistic. The overwhelming magnitudes and energies defeat assimilation at the level of sensory stimulus and imaginative synthesis, but they are taken as “pointing” to a yet greater Reality—something of whose mystery and splendor is glimpsed in the experience. The duality is essentially that of St Augustine’s “*et inhorresco et inardesco ...*”: “I shudder to think how different I am from it; yet insofar as I am like it, I am aglow with its fire.”¹⁷

But of course we can make alternative, if again partial, sense of it on secular lines. It is only by way of sudden perceptual overloading that the resurgent, exhil-

arating moment can be evoked. We are aware not merely of sensory and conceptual *defeat*, but of the possibility of reading aesthetic—expressive—character in those very aspects of nature that display overwhelming energies and magnitudes, or mystery. And that is sufficient to exhilarate us. We are aware, too, in a solemnly enlivening way, of our own spiritual ascendancy in finding the resources to attempt that aesthetic assimilation of the daunting.

For a final, closely related example of the crucial (and problematic) part metaphysical imagination can play in aesthetic experience of nature, consider the varying role of the thought of *infinity* in relation to the appreciation of a landscape.

An “endlessly” receding, sunlit landscape, or a calm night sky, may both readily suggest tranquil, benign continuations beyond nature as perceived—serene unbounded extrapolations. There have been writers, particularly among the Romantics, to whom the idea of infinity was a uniquely powerful source of good energy, life-enhancement. Wordsworth again: “By the imagination the mere fact is ... connected with that infinity without which there is no poetry.”¹⁸ In poetry “... it is the imaginative only, [*viz.*,] that which is conversant with or turns upon infinity, that powerfully affects me.” And that occurs, notably, in “passages where things are lost in each other, and limits vanish, and aspirations are raised.”¹⁹ Although a poet of a very different metaphysical conviction, Leopardi, even while confessing that the idea of infinity “shipwrecked” the mind, could yet find it “*dolce*.”²⁰ Hegel is lyrical: “At the name of the infinite, the heart and the mind light up.”²¹

But it is far from *dolce* in other contexts, and against other backgrounds of ideas. The thought and part-perception can be of a “nightmare infinite,” infinity as the never-completable, the demonically unreachable goal, the mockingly unfulfillable task. The difference in “metaphysical pathos” (in Lovejoy’s phrase) between benign and nightmare infinities is indeed a function of the varying contribution to experience of metaphysical imagination; and there have been fascinating examples in literature of attempts to transform the malign versions of infinity—or, as Coleridge called them, following Cudworth, “counterfeit infinity”—into the good infinity that exhilarates and energizes.²² In *The Ancient Mariner*, the demonic vision of a “million, million slimy things,” an uncountable overabundance of an insupportably alien kind, is transmuted to that of a world which—water snakes and all—could be the object of blessing and love.

In *Modern Painters*, Volume IV, Ruskin saw infinity as a clear and powerful symbol of deity, and not only in the seemingly boundless distance of landscapes, but even in the infinite gradation of nature’s curved forms.²³ One short passage cries out for a final comment, for it may bring home to us how subtle and variable may be the interconnection between the perceptual component and the metaphysical thought-component in aesthetic appreciation of nature. Ruskin writes: “... the sky at night, though we may know it boundless, is dark; it is a studded vault, a roof that seems to shut us in and down; but the bright distance has no limit, we feel its infinity, as we rejoice in its purity of light.”²⁴ Objectively scientifically speaking, we of course glimpse more distant regions by night than by day; but Ruskin is

seeking the most aesthetically effective bonding between the sensorily given and the metaphysical—seeking not simply to “know” but rather to “feel” infinity.²⁵

Notes

- 1 Cf. J. Levinson, “Pleasure, aesthetic,” in *A Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. D.E. Cooper (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 330-335.
- 2 William Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey* [1798].
- 3 T.J. Diffey, “Natural Beauty without Metaphysics,” in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, edited by Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 59.
- 4 For instance, Allen Carlson claims: “Science is the paradigm of that which reveals objects for what they are...” See Allen Carlson, “Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature,” in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, pp. 199-227. [Editors’ Note: See also Allen Carlson, “Appreciation and the Natural Environment,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1979): 267-276 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 2].]
- 5 Mary Warnock, *The Uses of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), Chapter 12.
- 6 Cf. J.N. Findlay, “The Logic of Bewusstseinslagen,” in *Language, Mind and Value* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1961).
- 7 I wrote about two notable contributors to the debate on Cosmic Fall, in “Godfrey Goodman: Nature Vilified,” *The Cambridge Journal* 7 (1954): 424-434 and “George Hakewill: The Virility of Nature,” *The Journal of the History of Ideas* 16 (1955): 135-150.
- 8 David Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* [1779], Part XI.
- 9 William Wordsworth, *Lines intended for The Prelude* [1805].
- 10 C. Waite, *The Making of Landscape Photographs* (London: Collins and Brown, 1992), p. 91.
- 11 John Ruskin, *Modern Painters* [Library Edition, 1843-1860], Volume 4, p. 115.
- 12 Ruskin, *Painters*, Volume 4, pp. 113 ff.
- 13 T. Gilby, *St Thomas Aquinas, Philosophical Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 89.
- 14 Dionysius (Pseudo-Dionysius, “the Areopagite”) [c.500AD], *The Divine Names*, trans. C.E. Holt (London: SPCK, 1920), pp. 100 ff., 106, 168.
- 15 One could argue that, when we extrapolate to the idea of deity, we do not, in thought, reach a marvelous coincidence of opposites: we are left, rather, with an irreducible set of contradictions. Compare Sartre on the contradictoriness of God conceived as *l’en-soi-pour-soi*. See J.-P. Sartre, *L’être et le néant* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1943), p. 653.
- 16 The classic study is Samuel Monk’s *The Sublime* (Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Paperback, 1960). I discussed some of these historical and current questions about sublimity in “The Concept of the Sublime: Has it any Relevance for Philosophy Today?” *Dialectics and Humanism* 15 (1988): 137-155.

- 17 St Augustine, *Confessions* [c.400 AD], XI, Chapter 9.
- 18 Reported in Crabb Robinson's *Diary* (London: Macmillan, 1869).
- 19 William Wordsworth, "Letter to W. S. Landor, 21/1/1824," *Letters*, ed. E. de Selincourt, revised A.G. Hill (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978).
- 20 Giacomo Leopardi "L'Infinito," in *Canti* [1816-1836], (Milan: Mondadori, 1976).
- 21 G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969), Volume I, Book I, Section I, Chapter II, C (a).
- 22 R. Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* [1673], Volume II, pp. 647 f.
- 23 Ruskin, *Painters*, Volume 4, p. 83.
- 24 Ruskin, *Painters*, Volume 4, p. 81.
- 25 This essay was first given as a lecture at the First International Conference on Environmental Aesthetics, Koli, Finland, 1994; and first published in *Environmental Values* 5 (1996): 191-204.

Appreciating Nature on Its Own Terms

Yuriko Saito



One kind of definition of a good person, or a moral person, is that that person does not impose his or her fantasy on another. That is, he or she is willing to acknowledge the reality of other individuals, or even of the tree or the rock. So to be able to stand and listen is, for me, a moral capacity, not just an intellectual one.¹

—Yi-Fu Tuan

I. Appropriate Aesthetic Appreciation of Art

One of the controversies in contemporary aesthetics concerns how to appreciate works of art correctly or appropriately. Recently a similar question of appropriateness has been posed regarding our aesthetic appreciation of nature. In this essay, I shall develop the notion of the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature by exploring the aesthetic relevance of the definition of moral goodness given above by cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan.

Despite many important differences between art and nature, examining the appropriate appreciation of a work of art should illuminate the content of the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature. First, in order to appreciate art properly, we must have relevant sensory experience of the object: the visual design of a painting and the tonal and rhythmic arrangement of music. In addition, we are to put the object in its own cultural/historical context and artistic medium, as well as attributing the correct artist, if known. In short, we interpret the art object on its own terms.

The reason and importance for doing so is usually regarded as avoiding “mistaken” and “incorrect” evaluations, such as judging a monochrome film to be a dull and boring faded color film or criticizing Japanese bamboo flute music for being less dramatic and powerful than a Western symphony. However, appreciating art correctly does not always guarantee the most satisfying aesthetic experience. An incorrect experience may make an otherwise “grating, cliché-ridden, pedestrian” object appear “exciting, ingenious,” hence a “masterpiece.”² Or, reading literary works with “deliberate anachronism and...erroneous attribution” may fill “the most placid works with adventure.”³

While these exercises may provide excitement, amusement, and sometimes even educational merit, I believe that they are inappropriate not only for cognitive but also for *moral* reasons. That is, art, in particular from the past or from a different culture, both challenges and entices us to overcome (at least to a certain extent) the confines of our own perspective by inviting us to visit an often unfamiliar world created by the artist. As John Dewey reminds us, the moral function of art is “to remove prejudice, do away with the scales that keep the eye from seeing, tear away the veils due to wont and custom, [and] perfect the power to perceive.”⁴ In other words, Dewey continues, “works of art are means by which we enter ... into other forms of relationship and participation than our own.”⁵ Appreciating art on its own terms helps us cultivate this moral capacity of recognizing and understanding the other’s reality through sympathetic imagination.

Perhaps we can derive an equivalent moral criterion for the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature from our willingness to submit to nature’s guidance. Such an attitude would involve listening to nature’s own story and appreciating it on its own terms, instead of imposing *our* story upon it. In what follows, I first argue that appreciating nature for its pure pictorial design or through historical/cultural/literary associations, while prevalent and entrenched, lacks the moral dimension specified above. On the other hand, I shall propose that our appreciation guided by any attempt to understand nature for what it is, whether it be science, mythology, or folklore, satisfies this moral criteria for appropriate appreciation.

II. Pictorial Appreciation of Nature

One of the most prevalent modes of appreciating nature, particularly in the West for the past two centuries, has been to attend exclusively to the pictorial surface of the object without reference to any associations. Originally established and popularized by the eighteenth century British writers on the picturesque, this pictorial appreciation recommends that we approach natural objects as “general forms, actions, and combinations” and “various arrangements in form, and colour.” For example, we are to view a landscape as if it were a landscape painting, often with the aid of a Claude glass.

This pictorial appreciation of nature was further promoted by aesthetic formalism at the beginning of this century, at first proposed to defend the value of abstract paintings. Just as a painting should be viewed as pure design, according to aesthetic formalism, nature should be appreciated only in terms of color, shape, texture, and three-dimensional perspective. As one advocate of this view, Clive Bell, asks:

Who has not, once at least in his life, had a sudden vision of landscape as pure form? For once, instead of seeing it as fields and cottages, he has felt it as lines and colours ... (I)s it not clear that he has won from material beauty the thrill

that, generally, art alone can give, because he has contrived to see it as a pure formal combination of lines and colours?⁶

This picturesque/formalist view still underlies many disciplines dealing with landscape today. For example, one geographer defines "landscape as aesthetic" as "a ... comprehensive abstraction in which all specific forms are dissolved into the basic language of art: into color, texture, mass, line, position, symmetry, balance, tension."⁷ Similarly, as Allen Carlson documents extensively, the methodology used in landscape assessment for forestry management, recreation planning, highway construction, and landscape architecture, is based upon a presupposition that nature's aesthetic value consists of "design factors: form, contrast, distance, color, light, and angle of view."⁸

No doubt the visual surface of nature is an integral and necessary element of our aesthetic appreciation. However, this *exclusive* attention to its pictorial surface falsifies nature's aesthetic value. First, the pictorial appreciation neglects the diverse non-visual means by which nature speaks to us: through the fragrance of the lily of the valley, the gentle song of a lark in early spring, and the refreshing coldness of a stream.⁹ The predominantly visual experience of nature thus can be characterized as our selective hearing in comparison with the richness of nature's gift to us.

Second, the exclusive emphasis on visual design results in our selective appreciation also by encouraging us to appreciate *only* those parts that are visually coherent, exciting, amusing, enjoyable, or pleasing. As Aldo Leopold complains, "concerned for the most part with show pieces," we are "willing to be herded in droves through 'scenic' places" and "find mountains grand if they be proper mountains with waterfalls, cliffs, and lakes." In contrast, we find the Kansas plains "tedious" and the prairies of Iowa and Southern Wisconsin "boring." We might say that these landscapes are scenically challenged.¹⁰

Indeed, many of us, particularly as tourists, seem to appreciate nature in this pictorial mode. Our preoccupation with finding and photographing scenic spots with spectacular views indicates our primarily pictorial interest in nature. Our attitude here is not too different from that of the two artists John Muir encountered on Mt. Ritter in the High Sierra. In search of the picturesque and the grand, they were satisfied only with a few scenic spots affording spectacular, startling views. The other parts, which attracted Muir, such as the autumn colors of the surrounding meadows and bogs, were "sadly disappointing" to the artists because they did not make "effective pictures."¹¹

This attitude toward nature often creates problems from the ecological point of view, as illustrated by the American national park system. Because it was initially established for preserving the crowd-pleasing monumental grandeur of the West, less spectacular, yet ecologically integral, surroundings were left outside of the national park protection, making them vulnerable to cultivation and mining.¹² Fur-

thermore, some ecologically important, but not scenic, lands were slow to be designated as national parks. Florida's Everglades, for example, was ridiculed as merely a swamp with "mighty little that was of special interest, and absolutely nothing that was picturesque or beautiful," unworthy of being "put alongside the magnificent array of scenic wonderlands that the American people have elevated into that glorious class."¹³

Attraction to scenic beauty is by itself not problematic; indeed it is most often our initial attraction to nature and, as such, should not be discouraged. However, it can become problematic if our appreciation ends there because we are not lending our ears to stories nature could be telling through its diverse parts, other than, or in addition to, visual splendor. Sometimes nature's voice may be a subtle whisper or a cryptic enigma rather than rhetorical eloquence. We need to cultivate our sensitivity to be able to discern and appreciate these diverse modes of its speech. But how?

III. Associationist Appreciation of Nature

In the history of nature appreciation, conscious attempts have sometimes been made to make scenically challenged parts of nature appreciable. Take, for example, nineteenth century American appreciation of landscape. Influenced by the associationist aesthetic theory then popular in Europe, it located the aesthetic value of an object in the series of associated ideas it evokes. Adoption of this associationist theory caused nineteenth century Americans a great deal of anxiety because American landscape, in general, unlike that of Europe, was considered lacking in historical and literary associations. Consequently, the American landscape was frequently described as "barren," "vacant," "dull," and "destitute of taste" in comparison with the European landscape "where every place and object has its real or romantic legend."¹⁴ This inferiority complex regarding American landscape compelled painters and writers such as Thomas Cole and Horatio Parsons to defend the aesthetic value of American landscape by invoking associations with future prospects, such as cultivated fields and developing towns. Other writers such as Washington Irving and J. Fenimore Cooper enlivened the American landscape by creating literary works about it, treating it as "the great theater of human events."¹⁵ All these attempts betray an underlying assumption that nature is not appreciable until it is "humanized" or "consecrated" by some human deed, either actual or imaginary. Even then, the natural object is appreciated as a means to celebrating our historical/cultural/literary events and accomplishments.

Though no longer engaged in a nationalistic project of creating human associations for nature, we, again particularly as tourists, continue to appreciate some natural objects primarily through historical/cultural/literary associations. Plymouth Rock and the Gettysburg battlefield are the prime examples from this country. Other cultures also commemorate natural objects for historical/literary/legendary associations. In Japan, for example, a particular ginkgo tree is celebrated as the

location of the assassination of a twelfth century Shogun, a plum tree for sprouting out of a pit spat out by a famous poet, a rock for the location where a Buddhist priest exchanged poetry with a village woman, and a lake for the spot where a beautiful young village girl drowned herself.¹⁶

This associationist appreciation of nature reminds us of John Locke's theory concerning the value of nature. By defining the basis of property rights as mixing one's labor with nature, Locke in effect claims that uncultivated, unhumanized nature is not as valuable as cultivated, humanized nature. It is not "property," worthy of protection, until it is cultivated. Hence, the wilderness of America to Locke was a wasteland until human toil cleared, tilled, and sowed the land to render it just like the fertile, cultivated land in England. According to him, "land that is left wholly to nature, that hath no improvement or pasturage, tillage, or planting, is called, as indeed it is, *waste*; and we shall find the benefit of it amount to little more than nothing."¹⁷ Indeed Locke's contemporaries generally preferred the geometrical precision embodied in the humanized and civilized landscape to uncultivated "wasteland"—what we now refer to as wilderness.¹⁸

Among our contemporaries, John Passmore seems to promote the view shared by John Locke and his contemporaries, as well as by nineteenth century American thinkers, that untouched land is alien to humans and we have both the right and responsibility to cultivate it. According to him, the ideal manifestations of this "cooperation with nature" are informal gardens as well as towns and roads that developed according to the native topography.¹⁹ The need to "humanize," "consecrate," and "cultivate" nature underlying the associationist appreciation of nature can be regarded as a non-material version of the Lockean theory of appropriating nature and Passmore's call for cooperating with nature.

The historical or cultural importance of the associationist appreciation of nature is undeniable. However, its significance lies in valuing nature as a theater or a prop for a human drama, rather than appreciating nature on its own terms. Insofar as appreciation is derived from accompanying historical/literary facts, this associationist approach implies that untouched nature by itself is devoid of aesthetic values due to the absence of culturalization. When stripped of historical drama, Plymouth Rock and the ginkgo tree will turn mute. In other words, to the extent our appreciation is dependent upon the (historical/literary) story we attach to these objects, we are not appreciating them for what they are, as natural objects.

Furthermore, for the associationist appreciation, the specific sensuous features of the object remain irrelevant. That is, the particular color, shape, size, and texture of Plymouth Rock are adventitious to its historical significance. But a careful attention to the sensory qualities of the object is necessary not only for the aesthetic experience but also for respecting the object for what it is.

Listening to nature *as nature*, I believe, must involve recognizing its own reality apart from us. It includes acknowledging that a natural object has its own unique history and function independent of the historical/cultural/literary significance given by humanity, as well as its specific perceptual features. Appreciating

nature on its own terms, therefore, must be based upon listening to a story nature tells of itself through all its perceptual features; that is, a story concerning *its* origin, make-up, function, and working, independent of human presence or involvement. Furthermore, by not imposing our agenda, whether it be a pictorial frame or an associated historical/cultural/literary fact, we become sensitive and open to the diverse modes of speech nature adopts. Nature, experienced in this way, is never mute with no story of its own to tell, even if devoid of pictorial magnificence or human associations. What then facilitates such an experience?

IV. Scientific Appreciation of Nature

There are attempts to understand nature for what it is, apart from human presence and involvement. Such attempts, I believe, underlie natural science (in the sense to be specified later), as well as other discourses, often indigenous, such as folklore and myth. I shall argue that the aesthetic appreciation of nature incorporating these considerations provides the most responsible appreciation of nature on its own terms. For want of a better term, I call this the scientific appreciation of nature.

The necessity of scientific knowledge in the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature has been proposed by Allen Carlson. According to him, just as proper appreciation of art must begin with the correct art historical understanding of the object, the appropriate appreciation of nature must also be based upon correct information regarding it. This information must be supplied by nature itself irrespective of our own associations, because “nature is natural—not our creation,” implying that “we can discover things about [natural objects] that are independent of any involvement by us in their creation.”²⁰ The facts about nature that are independent of human involvement, Carlson claims, are provided by scientific/commonsensical knowledge of naturalists and ecologists. Such knowledge helps us determine the story nature tells of itself through its sensuous surface.

I agree with Carlson’s view generally, though for a different reason. Carlson cites the *cognitive* reason for appropriately appreciating nature; that is, “if we are to make aesthetic judgments that are likely to be *true*.”²¹ However, I am emphasizing the *moral* dimension of forming such “true” aesthetic judgments. As I claimed in Section I, I believe that the ultimate rationale for appreciating any object appropriately, that is, on its own terms, is the moral importance of recognizing and sympathetically lending our ears to the story, however unfamiliar to us, told by the other. Without reference to its moral importance, the concern with truthfulness in our aesthetic judgment can be outweighed by the fact that improper appreciation (based upon false or irrelevant information or by ignoring any information) would sometimes yield more pleasant, exciting, or easier experiences.

The appropriateness of referring to science in our aesthetic appreciation of nature, however, has been challenged by those who hold that science is anthropocentric, both in its practical application and conceptual orientation. First, West-

ern science, based upon the Baconian program of scientific and technological progress and the Cartesian dualism and mechanistic view of nature, is often held responsible for many of today's ecological problems. As one critic puts it, "the claim that science will lead to an aesthetic appreciation of nature is very much brought into question by an environmental mess that is largely the product of science," because it "has done so much to reduce nature and to convert it into a set of piecemeal parts in a way that has no or little respect for the thing—exactly the opposite of listen[ing] to nature and understand[ing] it in its own terms."²²

An immediate response here is that ecological science is also science, although without the abuse of nature as its consequences. As for its challenge to the claim Carlson and I are putting forward, we are not proposing that "science will lead to an aesthetic appreciation," but rather that our aesthetic appreciation of nature must be informed and adjusted by relevant scientific facts. Guiding our aesthetic experience accordingly does not necessitate adopting an anthropocentric, and possibly disrespectful, attitude toward nature, nor does it imply endorsing utilitarian applications of scientific knowledge. Indeed, as I illustrate below, in some cases it is crucial that our aesthetic appreciation of nature be scientifically anchored in order for it to be ecologically responsible.

Science can be regarded anthropocentric in a conceptual sense, too. Stan Godlovitch, for example, challenges Carlson's view by holding that science still does not tell us nature's story; rather, it tells *our* story. Science organizes, interprets, and analyzes nature by means of our all-too-human conceptual scheme and vocabulary. Scientific endeavor therefore is a kind of humanization and (conceptual) appropriation of nature to suit our needs. According to Godlovitch, in science "the object is still *ours* in a way; a complex artifact hewn out of the cryptic morass." In short, "science ... offers us only a gallery of *our own* articulated images."²³ It is arrogant to assume that nature readily conforms to and harmonizes with our conceptual scheme for understanding. Hence, according to him, most appropriate experience and appreciation of nature is as "mystery, ineffability, and miraculous," resulting in "aesthetic aloofness and a sense of insignificance."²⁴

On one hand, there is no denying that science attempts to humanize nature by relying on *our* observations and by making it comprehensible to *us*. However, I am not sure whether the most appropriate attitude toward nature is to regard it as mysterious and ineffable, as Godlovitch suggests. Denying the possibility of understanding the other would rob us of our capacity to be sympathetic to it. Granted that our understanding of the other is always limited by the possibility that our own viewpoint, whether egocentric, ethnocentric, present-minded, or anthropocentric, may be coloring our perception of the other. However, within this limitation, there are different degrees of responsive and responsible effort we make to understand the other. Scientific stories we tell about nature, I believe, rate high on this scale. Unlike the associationist appreciation, they are stories of natural objects' own lives, suggested by their specific perceptible features, even if they must be told by means of *our* images and vocabulary.

There has been another challenge to the relevance of scientific information in our aesthetic appreciation of nature: that such knowledge leads us away from the immediate sensuous experience of nature. For example, Mark Twain describes how “the grace ... the poetry,” and “the romance and the beauty were all gone from the river” when he learned the scientific significance of the particular sunset, water movement, the color of the forest, and the like.²⁵ Or another writer claims that a meteorological concern is incompatible with the aesthetic appreciation of clouds because “a meteorologist *is* concerned, not with the visual appearance of a striking cloud formation, but with the causes which led to it.”²⁶ Likewise, another aesthetician contends that scientific knowledge leads us away from the aesthetics of the ocean because a scientist is concerned with “the salt which was crystallized out of it ... the gases into which the drops were moving” and “what can be done with water, how it can be used, what is its economic value, how it will carry my boat, [and] what has caused its movements.”²⁷

Carlson’s view is vulnerable to such challenges insofar as he includes all kinds of scientific knowledge as relevant to appropriately appreciating nature’s aesthetic values: “the story given by natural science—astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, genetics, meteorology, geology as well as the particular explanatory theories within these sciences.”²⁸ However, in order to meet the above challenges, some distinctions must be made within various scientific discourses. On one hand, we have to concede that indeed *some* scientific information does lead us away from the actual experience of nature. For example, the molecular structure of a rock or the medicinal value of a spring seems too removed from our immediate perceptual arena to be realizable on the sensuous surface. In general, these aesthetically irrelevant considerations belong to early modern sciences within the rationalist tradition (such as physics and chemistry). As defined by Eugene Hargrove, these discourses treat nature as consisting of primary qualities and reduce it into quantifiable, simple parts by “formulating models and hypotheses in accordance with pure reason,” which are timeless, universalizable, and beyond sense experience.²⁹

On the other hand, some other scientific information enhances or modifies our initial perceptual experience of nature. Such information is derived from what Hargrove calls natural history sciences (such as geology and biology), which are based upon observations, particularly of secondary qualities, and deal with objects and phenomena in their spatial and temporal context. For example, the geological origin of a mountain, the anatomical structure of an animal, or the camouflage phenomenon of an insect is embodied or manifested in the observable features of the object, and we appreciate the way in which each object is telling about its origin, structure, or function. Hargrove points out that the distinction between these two kinds of science explains why “natural history scientists often had more in common with poets and painters than they did with physicists and chemists.”³⁰

John Muir’s description of Mt. Ritter illustrates how knowledge from natural history sciences enhances one’s aesthetic experience:

The canyons, too, some of them a mile deep, mazing wildly through the mighty host of mountains, however lawless and ungovernable at first sight they appear, are at length recognized as the *necessary effects of causes* which followed each other in harmonious sequence—*Nature's poems carved on tables of stones* the simplest and most emphatic of her glacial compositions ... we thus contemplate Nature's methods of landscape creation, and *read the records she has carved on the rocks* ...³¹

In contrast to the accompanying artists' pictorial appreciation of the landscape, Muir attends to the way in which the geological events are embodied in the rock formations, and celebrates nature's own story-telling without imposing his own vision or poetry upon it.

Aldo Leopold's land aesthetics also emphasizes the importance of education in "nature study," in particular of evolution and ecology, which Leopold claims would "promote perception." Though "invisible and incomprehensible" at first, the appropriate scientific knowledge would enable us to decipher and appreciate those pictorially challenged parts of nature. They include "marsh-land chorus," "the song of a river," "the speech of hills," which is "a vast pulsing harmony—its score inscribed on a thousand hills, its notes the lives and deaths of plants and animals, its rhythms spanning the seconds and the centuries," "cranes" the appreciation of which "grows with the slow unraveling of earthly history," and "the weeds in a city lot, [which] convey the same lesson as the redwoods." Ultimately we will be able to "think like a mountain."³²

The relevant education in natural science sometimes affects our aesthetic experience in a negative manner. Consider the case of the Hetch Hetchy Valley, a part of Yosemite National Park with prominent cliffs. At the beginning of this century, it was discovered to be the best site for a dam and reservoir to serve the needs of 500,000 San Francisco residents whose lives were perennially plagued by draught. In addition to the utilitarian argument, the supporters of the dam also invoked an aesthetic argument. They claimed that the landscape with the dam would be even more aesthetically valuable because the reservoir would be "echoed by towering peaks and massive walls, and the falls of the Hetch Hetchy [would] still tumble; in addition, all of these features would be mirrored 'in the waters of the new creation'"; creating "one of the world's great scenic wonders."³³ Indeed this visual effect was illustrated by a touched-up photograph.

No matter how visually spectacular the effect may be, it seems that we cannot and should not separate the aesthetic and the ecological here. Although not nullifying its pictorial beauty, the destruction of the habitat for flora and fauna and the danger of contradicting water's natural flow would and should transform the pure visual splendor of the valley with a dam. It is not that the ecological value of the object should wholly determine its aesthetic value. Such ecological determinism, so to speak, neglects the sensuous experience that substantiates the aesthetic value; our aesthetic experience *begins and ends* with the sensuous surface. However, this

does not deny that our initial reaction is subject to modifications and revisions with additional information. In this regard, our aesthetic judgments of nature are not uniquely different from our art appreciation, moral discourse, or cognitive disciplines.

I have so far suggested that the scope of scientific knowledge necessary for our aesthetic appreciation of nature in Carlson's view must be narrowed. My next point, on the other hand, explores the way in which its scope should be expanded. I believe that (natural history) science in the strict, Western sense does not have a monopoly on the effort to "make sense of" nature's various phenomena and objects. Such attempts also include some indigenous traditions, folklore, and myths.³⁴ As Holmes Rolston III reminds us:

From his earliest traces, man has been a great storyteller. In the past, at profoundest levels, these have often been myths about the Earth humans inhabit ... At present, an exciting part of the story of science is that the history of Earth is being better told ...³⁵

Some myths and folktales are about human deeds with natural objects as their backdrop and props, as in the associationist appreciation of nature discussed previously. However, there are other kinds of myths, folklore, and indigenous tales that attempt to explain or make sense of observable features of specific natural objects. Unlike the associationist appreciation where the primary interest is human deeds, the interests that motivate these narratives are the shape of a mountain, the particular climate of a region, the spawning behavior of a fish, and the color, shape, and habitat of a flower.³⁶

It is true that many of these narratives make use of various anthropomorphic devices for explaining these natural objects and phenomena. To that extent, folk narratives are attempts at humanizing nature, just as scientific stories must be told in the language comprehensible to us by utilizing concepts, categories, and explanatory models we construct. However, their humanizing activity differs from associationist appreciation, which, I argued, assumes that nature is mute with no story to tell until some human drama consecrates it. Both scientific explanation and folk narratives are our attempts at helping nature tell its story to us concerning its own history and function through its sensuous surface.

The notion of bioregional narrative proposed by Jim Cheney comes close to what I have in mind here. Native American narratives concerning nature, for example, according to Cheney, in contrast to the Judeo-Christian account, are "closely tied to place and, for that reason ... not thought of as exportable." Rather than assimilating the world to fit an abstract, totalizing understanding by ignoring individual differences, a bioregional narrative "assimilates language to the situation, bends it, shapes it to fit." The stories of nature thus told result in "tales we tell of our and our communities' 'storied residence' in place," which are "talks not of universal truth, but of local truth, bioregional truth."³⁷

The difference between bioregional narratives and universal narratives, however, is, I believe, one of degree rather than of distinct kinds. On one end of the spectrum are creation myths, which attempt to explain the origin of the whole earth; on the other end are folktales giving an account of the origin of individual natural objects specific to the region. The difference lies in the degree of *specific* attention given to individual features of each object. That is, a creation myth, for example, might attribute the origin of all mountains to a single cause, explaining the aspect of elevation in general. A bioregional narrative, on the other hand, would try to give different accounts for individual mountains: a small, round mountain in the middle of a field; a large, symmetrical, steep cone-shaped mountain soaring to the sky from the sea level; another with hot, noxious, yellow molten sulfur oozing from its side; and yet another with a lake at its top. While universalizing, totalizing narratives may also stem from the same genuine wonder as to how nature came to be and why it is the way it is, the more specific the observation and attention become (as in bioregional narratives), the more sensitive we are to the diverse ways in which natural objects speak about their respective history and functions through their sensuous qualities.

V. Conclusion

The appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature, I have argued, must embody a moral capacity for recognizing and respecting nature as having its own reality apart from our presence, with its own story to tell. Furthermore, it requires sensitive ears to discern what story it may be telling with its specific sensuous surface, no matter how unglamorous. I suggested that our attempts to somehow make sense of natural objects and phenomena guide our sensuous experience of nature toward appropriately appreciating it, by modifying, enhancing, illuminating, or transforming its content. Such attempts can be found in (natural history) science and folk narratives, which are constructed to give an account of the specific characteristics of natural objects and phenomena.

I should close by pointing out that my discussion is not meant to reject the pictorial or associationist appreciation of nature altogether. Our art appreciation develops and matures with education; so should nature appreciation. It would be unreasonable and counterproductive to overwhelm a novice in art appreciation with the information concerning the artist's life, the history of, and technique involved in, the particular medium, the social/historical/cultural context of the art object, and its religious symbolism. Doing so will stifle his or her initial uninhibited response. Even Aldo Leopold, the champion of aesthetic education concerning nature, recognizes that "our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty."³⁸ The description of our appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature outlined here, therefore, should be taken as the direction for guiding our aesthetic education.³⁹

Notes

- 1 Yi-Fu Tuan, "Yi-Fu Tuan's Good Life," *On Wisconsin* 9 (1987).
- 2 Kendall L. Walton, "Categories of Art," *The Philosophical Review* 79 (1970): 334-367.
- 3 Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*," in *Labyrinths*, ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions Books, 1964), p. 44.
- 4 John Dewey, *Art as Experience* [1934] (New York: Capricorn Books, 1958), p. 325.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 333.
- 6 Clive Bell, *Art* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1913), p. 53.
- 7 D.W. Meinig, "The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene," in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscape*, ed. D.W. Meinig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 46.
- 8 Allen Carlson, "Formal Qualities in the Natural Environment," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 13 (1979): 100. See also Allen Carlson, "On the Possibility of Quantifying Scenic Beauty," *Landscape Planning* 4 (1977): 131-172.
- 9 Arnold Berleant has been the foremost speaker on this problem of predominately pictorial appreciation of nature. See his *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992). [Editors' Note: Chapter 11 of *Aesthetics of Environment*, "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature" is reprinted in this volume, Chapter 3.] There are other contemporary works that stress the importance of all the senses involved in our aesthetic appreciation of nature: J. Douglas Porteous, *Landscapes of the Mind: World of Sense and Metaphor* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Yi-Fu Tuan, *Passing Strange and Wonderful: Aesthetics, Nature, and Culture* (Washington DC: Island Press, 1993); David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than Human World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996). Nature is different from art in its multi-sensory appeal. With respect to art, there exists a conventional agreement that limits what sensory qualities are aesthetically relevant. For example, the smell and taste of paint, no matter how interesting, are not integral to the aesthetic value of a painting as a painting.
- 10 Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac: With Essays on Conversation from Round River* [1948] (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966). The reference to showpieces comes from p. 193, proper mountains, p. 179, the Kansas plains, p. 180, and prairies of Iowa and Wisconsin, p. 193. A good discussion of Leopold's land aesthetics can be found in J. Baird Callicott's "The Land Aesthetic," *Orion Nature Quarterly* (1984): 16-22. Leopold's emphasis on the aesthetic value of the scenically challenged parts of nature support the notion of what Allen Carlson calls "positive aesthetics": the view that every part of nature is aesthetically positive. See his "Nature and Positive Aesthetics," *Environmental Ethics* 6 (1984): 5-34. For a similar view, see Holmes Rolston III's *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Value in the Natural World* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), pp. 237-243. [Editors' Note: See also Holmes Rolston III, "The Aesthetic Experience of Forests," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 157-166 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 10].] I have also

- explored the notion of unscenic nature in "The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56 (1998): 101-111
- 11 John Muir, *The Mountains of California* [1894], included in *The American Landscape: A Critical Anthology of Prose and Poetry*, ed. John Conron (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 255.
 - 12 For an account of the concerns regarding the area surrounding Yellowstone National Park, see John Skow, "Mother Lode vs. Mother Nature," *Time*, November 22, 1993, pp. 58-9. For Glacier National Park, see "Park Boundary No Barrier to Environmental Warfare," *The Providence Sunday Journal*, November 12, 1989. Also see "The Fall of the Wild," *Newsweek*, 28 July 1986: 52-54, for the map of the ecologically problematic border of Yellowstone.
 - 13 Cited by Alfred Runte, *National Parks: the American Experience*, Second Edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), p. 131.
 - 14 Sarah Hale, "The Romance of Travelling," in *Traits of American Life* (Philadelphia: E.L. Carey & A. Hart, 1835), p. 190. Also see Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," [*The American Monthly Magazine*, 1836], Horatio Parsons, *The Book of Niagara Falls* [1836], both included in *The American Landscape*; and N.P. Willis, *American Scenery; or, Land, Lake and River Illustrations of Transatlantic Nature* [1840] (Barre, MA: Imprint Society, 1971). Hans Huth's seminal work, *Nature and the American: Three Centuries of Changing Attitudes* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972) gives a thorough historical account of this nineteenth century American attitude toward the landscape.
 - 15 Cole, "Essay," p. 571.
 - 16 These are representative of the collection of Japanese folklore and historical legends compiled in the fifteen volumes of *Nihon Densetsu Taikei* [*Complete Collection of Japanese Folklore*], ed. Hiroyuki Araki, et al. (Tokyo: Mizuumi Shobo, 1983).
 - 17 John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* [1690], Section 41. Also see Sections 36, 37, 45, 46, 47, 48, and 49.
 - 18 This sentiment is extensively documented by Keith Thomas in *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), particularly in the section entitled "Cultivation or Wilderness?"
 - 19 John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), p. 38. I thank the editor of *Environmental Ethics*, Eugene Hargrove, for the reference to Passmore's work.
 - 20 Allen Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1979): 267-276 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 2].
 - 21 Carlson, "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment and Objectivity," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 40 (1981): 25. Carlson hints, but does not develop, the moral importance for appreciating nature on its own terms "if our appreciation is to be at a deeper level," by noting that doing so "is important not only for aesthetic but also for moral and ecological reasons." (The first passage comes from "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment and Objectivity," p. 25, emphasis added, and the second from "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," p. 274 [this volume, p. 73].

- 22 Comments by an anonymous referee for *Environmental Ethics*.
- 23 Stan Godlovitch, "Icebreakers: Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 11 (1994): 15-30 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 5], p. 23, emphases added.
- 24 Godlovitch, "Icebreakers," p. 23 and p. 26 [this volume, p. 118 and p. 121].
- 25 *Life on the Mississippi* [1883], included in *Mark Twain: Mississippi Writings* (New York: Viking Press, 1982), p. 285.
- 26 Jerome Stolnitz, *Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art Criticism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1960), p. 35.
- 27 Hugo Munsterberg, *The Principles of Art Education* [1905], reprinted as "Connection in Science and Isolation in Art," in *A Modern Book of Esthetics*, Third Edition, ed. Melvin Rader (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), p. 438.
- 28 Allen Carlson, "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, eds. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 220.
- 29 Eugene Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1989), p. 40.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- 31 Muir, *The Mountains of California*, pp. 263-64, emphases added.
- 32 All the passages come from Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*. The reference to the promotion of perception comes from p. 290, necessity of the otherwise invisible background, p. 291, marsh-land chorus, p. 171, the song of a river, the speech of hills, and a vast pulsing harmony, p. 158, cranes, p. 102, weeds, p. 292, and "Thinking Like a Mountain" is the title of one essay included in "The Quality of Landscape," pp. 137-41. It is noteworthy that, while promoting "nature study" for cultivating our land aesthetics sensibility, Leopold criticizes academic sciences for their failure to engage their students with actual, observable nature. In studying "the instruments of the great orchestra," researchers *qua* scientists are discouraged from attending to the music created when their instrument is plucked, because "the detection of harmony is the domain of poets." As a result, science does not entertain the idea that "the good life on any river may depend on the perception of its music, and the preservation of some music to perceive." (pp. 162-63).
- 33 Cited by Runte, *National Parks*, p. 80. Roderick Nash also devotes a chapter to the discussion of Hetch Hetchy in his *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Third Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982). Various problems, including aesthetic issues, associated with the recent proposal to "restore" the Hetch Hetchy valley by draining the water are explored by Nancy Lee Wilkinson in "No Holier Temple: Responses to Hodel's Hetch Hetchy Proposal," *Landscape* (1991): 1-9. Her article is illustrated by the photographs of the site before and after the dam's completion, including the touched-up photo used by the supporters of the dam.
- 34 In one of his more recent writings, Carlson seems to hint that the story we tell on behalf of nature may also include folklore and myth. He claims that in appreciating nature "part of our appreciative response is directed towards whatever is in our story,"

whether it be “an all-powerful god, a folklore of demons and fairies, or a world of natural forces.” See “Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature,” p. 222.

- 35 Rolston, *Environmental Ethics*, pp. 344-5.
- 36 It is interesting to note in this regard that the fifteen volume collection of Japanese folklore and legend (cited in note 16) organizes the stories into two categories: “Bunka Joji Densetsu” [“Tales of Culture and Epic”] and “Shizen Setsumei Densetsu” [“Tales of Explanation of Nature”].
- 37 Jim Cheney, “Postmodern Environmental Ethics: Ethics as Bioregional Narrative,” *Environmental Ethics* 11 (1989), p. 120 and p. 133. For the origin of the term “bioregionalism,” see of Max Oelschaelger, *The Idea of Wilderness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 440. Gary Snyder, in “The Place, the Region, and the Commons,” claims that “the myths of world-creation tell you how *that mountain* was created and how *that peninsula* came to be there,” and that “bioregional awareness teaches us in *specific* ways. It is not enough just to ‘love nature’ or to want to ‘be in harmony with Gaia.’ Our relation to the natural world takes place in a *place*, and it must be grounded in information and experience”; see *Practice of the Wild* (New York: North Point Press, 1990), p. 26 and p. 39.
- 38 Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*, p. 102.
- 39 An earlier and much different version of this paper was presented at the First International Conference on Environmental Aesthetics, Koli, Finland, 1994. I would like to thank Eugene Hargrove, the Editor of *Environmental Ethics*, its two referees, and Tomoji Shogenji for their comments and suggestions. In particular, I am greatly indebted to Hargrove’s detailed references and specific suggestions.

Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature

Emily Brady



I.

We are familiar with the ways in which the aesthetic response to art is guided by features of both the work and the individual subject, but what guides our aesthetic appreciation of nature? To interpret and evaluate a painting the perceptual features of the work guide our visual and imaginative exploration of the canvas, and we find meaning through these features as viewed within the framework of background knowledge of the painting, feelings, and associations. My appreciation of David's *Cupid and Psyche* is guided by the perceptual features of the painting—I recognize a smiling young man with his arm draped over the female figure. If I know the myth, I know that the painting shows Cupid after he has seduced the beautiful Psyche, who lies satisfied beside him. I delight in the utter arrogance of his sensuous pose, the smile that borders on a smirk, and I judge the painting to be the best depiction of the myth, finely executed and expressive of the myth's entire narrative in a single pictorial moment. When we turn to nature, however, the guidance of an artistic context is absent. Various natural objects¹—beetles, buttercups, seascapes, or landscapes—lack a human maker, an artist, and also an artistic context in respect of the type of artwork, e.g., painting or sculpture, and in respect of style, e.g., cubist or surrealist. In my enjoyment of the soft blue-green skyline of the Blue Ridge Mountains, my appreciation is guided by what I see: colors, shapes, texture, as well as folklore and other associations; but it is not directed by an artist or a body of artworks. The comparison of art and nature appreciation highlights the problem that arises when artistic context is absent from aesthetic appreciation; what replaces artistic context in the appreciation of nature? What structures our aesthetic interpretation and evaluation of buttercups and seascapes?

Two opposing positions have been offered to solve this problem, a science-based approach² and a nonscience-based approach.³ In this essay I suggest a solution to the problem by pointing to the drawbacks of the science-based approach. I argue that the foundation of the science-based model is flawed, and that scientific knowledge is too constraining as a guide for appreciation of nature *qua* aesthetic object. I offer an alternative, nonscience-based approach, which makes perception and imagination central to guiding aesthetic appreciation.

II.

The science-based approach maintains that scientific knowledge guides our aesthetic appreciation of nature. Allen Carlson's "natural environmental model" draws on Kendall Walton's essay, "Categories of Art," to argue that knowledge of the natural sciences and their "commonsense predecessors and analogues" replaces artistic context in our appreciation of nature. Walton claims that appropriate aesthetic appreciation of art depends on having knowledge of art history and criticism, which enables us to perceive it in the correct category, for example, we appreciate *Cupid and Psyche* inappropriately if we perceive it in the category of a post-impressionist work.⁴ By analogy, Carlson argues that there are correct categories for the aesthetic appreciation of nature. These categories are fixed by scientific knowledge so that, for example, correct aesthetic appreciation of a whale must involve viewing it in the correct category of a mammal (rather than as a fish).⁵

If one agrees with Walton's argument, it is convenient to appeal to *natural* history instead of art history to determine appropriate appreciative categories for nature. As artifacts, paintings can be contextualized according to their history; and for natural objects, waterfalls, why not turn to their history—ecology and geology. But a closer look reveals a weakness in the analogy as well as more general problems with the science-based approach. The first problem involves understanding what counts as the scientific knowledge that is supposed to guide appreciation in the natural environmental model. In a response to Noël Carroll's criticisms of the model, Carlson says:

The primary case Carroll presents of something that is not meant to be commonsense knowledge of nature in the relevant sense is, in the waterfall example, "that the stuff that is falling down is water." However, it is not completely clear why such knowledge is not commonsense knowledge in the relevant sense. Is it not the product of the commonsense predecessors and analogues of natural science?⁶

In these remarks, Carlson minimizes his knowledge requirement in such a way as to make it ineffective for determining the categories of appreciation he wants. If all that is needed to fix appropriate appreciation is having a concept of the object, then this knowledge cannot do the work that Carlson requires of it. By his own argument, it would appear that to appreciate a waterfall we need to know not just that it is water, but that it is a waterfall, i.e., it is a lot of water pouring with great force, having been channeled through a relatively narrow area. Only this depth of knowledge would equip us to appreciate the waterfall's grandeur. This point fits with the whale example above, where he claims that appropriate appreciation requires not merely that we know it is a whale, but also that we perceive it as a mammal because we would be unable to appreciate its grace if we perceive it as a fish.⁷

Furthermore, Carlson bases the depth of knowledge required by reference to Walton's categories of art, which involve knowledge of art history and criticism, yet the analogy breaks down in the waterfall example. Here Carlson is willing to weaken his requirement to identifying an object under a general category—the stuff that is falling down is water, not soil—yet this is not analogous to Walton's categories, in which correct appreciation involves more specific knowledge than the capacity to identify a work of art as a painting as opposed to a sculpture. For example, to correctly judge Picasso's *Guernica*, we must perceive it in the more specific category of a cubist rather than an impressionist painting.

The consequence of the disanalogy is that the natural environmental model cannot provide a clear answer to the problem of what grounds aesthetic appreciation of nature. This weakness is internal to Carlson's own strategy of replacing artistic categories with scientific ones: the strength of his categories is lost when he generalizes them so much as to include everyday knowledge of objects. To avoid this, we might rely on remarks by Carlson that indicate a much stronger scientific foundation for his model, but if this path is chosen further problems emerge. I return to Carlson's response to Carroll to set out the first of these.

In his criticism of two nonscience-based models, Carlson raises an excellent question: What makes these models of nature appreciation a type of *aesthetic* appreciation?⁸ But we should ask this question of Carlson's own model. It strikes me as odd to claim that scientific knowledge is essential for appreciating nature *aesthetically*. Scientific knowledge may be a good starting point for appreciation characterized by curiosity, wonder, and awe, but is it necessary for perceiving aesthetic qualities? Counterexamples are not difficult to find. I can appreciate the perfect curve of a wave combined with the rushing white foam of the wave crashing on to sand without knowing how waves are caused. My judgement of the wave as spectacular and exhilarating can be dependent solely on an appreciation of perceptual qualities and any associations or feelings that give meaning to these qualities. It might be argued that my response also involves the very basic knowledge that what I see is a wave, but this cannot count as an appreciative category for Carlson (as shown by the waterfall example above). I am not suggesting a formalist approach, which makes knowledge irrelevant to aesthetic appreciation, for that would "purify away" the richness of aesthetic experience of nature.⁹ All sorts of knowledge may be appropriate according to the particular object of appreciation, e.g., the cultural narratives of history, religion, and folklore.¹⁰ However, while such knowledge may expand appreciation as the backdrop of an aesthetic response or when more actively fed in, this knowledge is not always essential to appreciation.

Carlson's emphasis on scientific knowledge for framing appreciation also raises a practical problem for his model. His motive for fixing the appreciative context of aesthetic judgements with scientific categories is to achieve some degree of objectivity, so that conservationists and other environmental decision-makers might more easily use it to determine the aesthetic value of some part of the natural environment.¹¹ However, alongside this possible advantage is the disadvan-

tage that scientific and aesthetic value might become indistinguishable in the deliberative process. Ecological value in particular plays a dominant role in the process that leads to a decision about how to conserve or manage the natural environment, yet aesthetic value is often dismissed as too subjective and too difficult to measure, and thus loses an important place alongside other types of value. To ensure that aesthetic value is treated seriously in practice, we need a model of aesthetic appreciation of nature that carves out a distinctive place for *aesthetic* appreciation and provides an understanding of aesthetic value as not merely personal or arbitrary. Carlson's model meets the second criterion, but I am doubtful that it meets the first, because although it is sympathetic to disinterestedness, it lacks sufficient emphasis on other distinctive features of the aesthetic response: perception and imagination. We can develop a model that meets both criteria by prioritizing these aspects of the aesthetic response. (I expand on this point in the next section where I set out my alternative to the science-based model.)

My final objection to the science-based model involves a further concern about Carlson's emphasis on science. Another distinctive aspect of aesthetic appreciation is its *free* yet disinterested character; in particular we are freed from instrumental or intellectual concerns. In this respect, contemplation of the beauty of buttercups or seascapes is directed by perceptual qualities, rather than the origins or categories of these natural objects. Scientific knowledge can impede attention to these qualities, thus diverting aesthetic attention. Again the problem stems from making scientific knowledge a condition of appropriate aesthetic appreciation, with another undesirable implication—the necessary condition is too limiting on the aesthetic response.¹² Although Carlson provides an excellent account of the differences between artworks and natural objects and how these differences shape our aesthetic response,¹³ the natural environmental model does not adequately take on board the demands of aesthetic appreciation when we move from art to nature. In this context, we need an approach that allows for the freedom, flexibility, and creativity demanded by nature *qua* aesthetic object. The complexity of nature provides the possibility of rich and rewarding aesthetic experience, but such an experience is made as much by the object as by the percipient—we must take up the challenge that natural objects offer. Ronald Hepburn expresses this well when he says that:

Aesthetic experience of nature can be meager, repetitive, and undeveloping. To deplore such a state of affairs and to seek amelioration is to accept an ideal that can be roughly formulated thus. It is the ideal of a rich and diversified experience, far from static, open to constant revision of viewpoint and of organization of the visual field, constant increase in scope of what can be taken as an object of rewarding aesthetic contemplation, an ideal of increase in sensitivity and in mobility of mind in discerning expressive qualities in natural objects.¹⁴

This echoes Dewey's warning that the enemies of the aesthetic are those experiences of the world that are conventional, hackneyed, humdrum, and inchoate.¹⁵

Both Hepburn and Dewey point to the power of *imagination* as the human capacity that enables us to create fresh perspectives on the world. Imagination, along with perception, is an important resource for taking up the aesthetic challenge offered by our natural environment.

The most desirable model of aesthetic appreciation of nature will solve the problem of how to guide appreciation in the absence of artistic context, and also meet the more practical requirements of providing a way to make aesthetic judgments that are not merely subjective as well as providing a way to distinguish aesthetic value from other values. With its emphasis on science, Carlson's model cannot meet the first and third requirements. The natural environmental model is problematic with either a weak or strong foundation of science: minimizing the requirement to everyday knowledge of objects makes the foundation of the natural environmental model ineffective for directing appreciation, while strengthening the requirement makes it both difficult to distinguish aesthetic from scientific value and excessively restrictive on the aesthetic response.

How to cope with the indeterminacy of nature without the help of artistic context is the problem here, and I have shown that we cannot find a solution by replacing artistic context with the constraints of science. Nor does the solution lie in turning purely to the subject. In the next section I argue that we need an approach that draws on both subject and object, where both contribute to guiding the response, and I propose that instead of using scientific knowledge as the basis of aesthetic appreciation of nature, we turn to the aesthetic resources with which we are more familiar.

III.

My non-science-based model draws on our perceptual and imaginative capacities to provide a foundation for aesthetic appreciation of nature. The model is loosely Kantian, for it also includes disinterestedness as a guide to appropriate appreciation. How exactly can these capacities provide the basis of a desirable alternative to the science-based approach? To answer this question, I begin constructing my alternative model with a discussion of the role of perception, before turning to the role of imagination.

As with art, the aesthetic response to natural objects begins with perceptual exploration of the aesthetic object. With *Cupid and Psyche*, I explore the features in the painting, recognizing the objects depicted as well as gradually interpreting what I see. This recognition and interpretation leads to an appreciation of the artist's skill in composition and the expressiveness of the depicted figures—Cupid's arrogance beside Psyche's sensuousness. With a set of natural objects, such as a seascape, my perception is not directed by what an artist has depicted, but it is nonetheless directed by the recognition and enjoyment of perceptual qualities. I focus on the foreground of the seascape, the perfect curve of the wave and the white foam that coincides with the spectacular crashing sound of the waves hit-

ting the sand. I delight in the contrast of the still water in the horizon, which presents a peaceful and dramatic backdrop to the waves. My appreciation of aesthetic qualities is directed by what I perceive, but what I pick out for appreciation depends to some extent on the effort I make with respect to engaging my perceptual capacities. With art, much depends on the ability of the artist to create an engaging and imaginative work of art. With nature, the character of the natural object to a great extent determines how much perceptual effort is required. It may take less effort to see the beauty of a particularly grand landscape than a mudflat or a wasteland. However, mudflats and wastelands may also have aesthetic value and perceiving that is dependent upon the effort of the percipient.

An example from my own experience helps to illustrate this point. The local government where I live is debating how to manage a landscape that was formerly the site of an oil refinery. Besides some remnants of building foundations and an old road around the site, it has become a habitat for various plants, insects, and birds, as well as pond life in two ponds on the site. Some have argued for digging up the landscape to replace it with a neat and trim park. Others have argued that it should be left as it is, with the exception of building a boardwalk or path and a few information boards to facilitate exploration of the area for visitors. I have spent some time exploring the place, and discovered that what appeared to be a dull landscape was in fact very aesthetically interesting. Through careful attention to the various aspects of the landscape, I discovered the graceful flight of numerous birds, colorful wildflowers, and an elegant pair of swans in one of the ponds. My delight in these aspects of the place may have been heightened by my background knowledge of the debate and the history of the place, but the aesthetic value I found there did not depend upon such knowledge, rather it depended on perceptual interest and immersion in the landscape.¹⁶

Such perceptual attentiveness is intimately linked to imagination. Imagination encourages a variety of possible perceptual perspectives on a single natural object or a set of objects, thereby expanding and enriching appreciation. Hepburn points to imagination's power to "... shift attention flexibly from aspect to aspect of the natural objects before one, to shift focus from close-up to long shot, from textual detail to overall atmospheric haze or radiance; to overcome stereotyped grouping and clichéd ways of seeing."¹⁷ Perception also supports the activity of imagination by providing the choreography of our imaginings. In these ways, the perceptual qualities of the aesthetic object as well as the imaginative power of the percipient come together to direct aesthetic appreciation.

To illustrate the role of imagination¹⁸ in our aesthetic appreciation of nature I identify four specific modes of imaginative activity in relation to natural objects: *exploratory*, *projective*, *ampliative*, and *revelatory* imagination.¹⁹ Alongside perception, these modes identify and organize many of the ways we use imagination when we appreciate natural objects. We may use none, some, or all of them, and our responses range from imaginatively thin to imaginatively thick, depending on the aesthetic object and the imagination of the percipient.

Exploratory imagination is the most closely tied to perception of the various modes we use. Here, imagination explores the forms of the object as we perceptually attend to it, and imagination's discoveries can, in turn, enrich and alter our perception of the object. Whilst perception does much of the work in simply grasping the object and cordoning it off in our perceptual field, it is imagination that reaches beyond this in a free contemplation of the object. In this way exploratory imagination helps the percipient to make an initial discovery of aesthetic qualities. For example, in contemplating the bark of a locust tree, visually, I see the deep clefts between the thick ridges of the bark. Images of mountains and valleys come to mind, and I think of the age of the tree given the thickness of the ridges and how they are spaced apart. I walk around the tree, feeling the wide circumference of the bark. The image of a seasoned old man comes to mind, with deep wrinkles from age. These imaginings lead to an aesthetic judgement of the tree as stalwart, and I respect it as I might a wise old sage. My interpretation of the locust tree is tied to its non-aesthetic qualities, such as the texture of the bark, and the associations spawned by perceptual qualities.

Another feature of the exploratory mode is that imagination sometimes undeliberately searches for unity in a scene where perception is unequal to the task. Imagination may struggle to bring together the various aspects of a moor that stretches beyond sight by supplying missing detail or filling in what is not seen, such as images of the landscape beyond the horizon.

Projective imagination draws on imagination's projective powers. Projection involves imagining "on to" what is perceived such that what is actually there is somehow added to, replaced with, or overlaid by, a projected image. In this way projective imagination is associated with deliberate "seeing as," where we intentionally, not mistakenly, see something as another thing. We put "seeing as" to work in order to try out new perspectives on objects by projecting images onto them.

In visually exploring the stars at night, imaginative activity may overlay perception in attempting to unify the various forms traced by individual stars, perhaps by naturally projecting geometrical shapes onto them. Sometimes we take the further imaginative leap of projecting ourselves *into* natural objects. For example, to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of an alpine flower, I might somatically imagine what it is like to live and grow under harsh conditions. Without imagining such conditions I may be unable to appreciate the remarkable strength hidden so beautifully in the delicate quality of the flower. Both of these examples show how imagination provides a more intimate aesthetic experience, and thus allows us to explore aesthetic qualities more deeply than through perception alone.

The third mode of imaginative activity, *ampliative imagination*, involves the *inventive* powers of imagination, and need not make use of images. It is marked by heightened creative powers and a special curiosity in its response to natural objects. Here imagination amplifies what is given in perception and thereby reaches beyond the mere projection of images onto objects. This activity may thus be

described as more penetrative, resulting in a deeper imaginative treatment of the object. It is imagination in its most active mode in aesthetic experience.

This use of imagination involves both visualizing and the leaps of imagination that enable us to approach natural objects from entirely new standpoints. In contemplating the smoothness of a sea pebble, I visualize the relentless surging of the ocean as it has shaped the pebble into its worn form. I might also imagine how it looked before it became so smooth, this image contributing to my wonder and delight in the object. Merely thinking about the pebble is not sufficient for appreciating the silky smoothness, which is emphasized by contrasting its feel with an image of its pre-worn state. Ampliative imagination enables us to expand upon what we see by placing or contextualizing the aesthetic object with narrative images. Andrew Wyeth illustrates this with another example from the sea: "A white mussel shell on a gravel bank in Maine is thrilling to me because it's all the sea—the gull that brought it there, the rain, the sun that bleached it there by a stand of spruce woods."²⁰

Ampliative imagination also accounts for a nonvisualizing activity in which we try out novel ways to aesthetically view some object. Calling on imagination in this way facilitates the perspective of viewing a valley as lush and green, imbued with tranquillity, or by contrast, focusing on the valley's shape as carved out by the icy steeliness of glaciers.

Where ampliative imagination leads to the discovery of an *aesthetic truth*, I call this imaginative activity *revelatory*. In this mode, invention stretches the power of imagination to its limits, and this often gives way to a kind of truth or knowledge about the world—a kind of revelation in the non-religious sense. When my alternative contemplation of the valley, glaciers and all, reveals the tremendous power of the earth to me, a kind of truth has emerged through a distinctively aesthetic experience.

I want to distinguish an aesthetic truth from a non-aesthetic truth according to the manner in which it becomes known. We do not seek out aesthetic truths in the way we seek out the answers to philosophical or scientific problems. Rather, aesthetic truths are revealed through a heightened aesthetic experience, where perceptual and imaginative engagement with nature facilitate the kind of close attention that leads to revelation. A quick glance at a lamb reveals little except an acknowledgement of its sweetness. But the fuller participation of perception and imagination can lead to a truth about innocence. Contemplating the fresh whiteness of a lamb and its small, fragile stature evokes images of purity and naiveté. It is through dwelling aesthetically and imaginatively on such natural things that we achieve new insight.

IV.

The exploratory, projective, ampliative, and revelatory modes of imagination explain how imagination guides aesthetic appreciation of nature. More generally,

my model provides an appreciative context by bringing together perception and imagination in place of scientific knowledge.

However, my model raises a potentially serious objection. To what extent should imagination play a role in appreciation? It might be argued that the use of imagination is likely to cause incorrect or inappropriate responses by trivializing the aesthetic object. Such trivial treatment emerges with irrelevant imaginings by the percipient; imaginings that cannot be tied to the perceptual properties of the object, or those that indulge the percipient in a personal fantasy. This line of argument might continue by claiming that imagination inevitably leads to experiences that are too unpredictable, too arbitrary and prone to fantasy to guide appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature.

Carlson does not explicitly make this objection, but I believe that his model entails it. His account of the justification of aesthetic judgements of nature incorporates the view that there is an appropriate way to appreciate natural objects when approached from the aesthetic point of view. Correct aesthetic judgement depends on appreciation of nature informed by science, and therefore imaginative responses, which diverge from experiencing natural objects through their ecological, geological or other scientific categories, would be inappropriate.

Although I have rejected Carlson's model as too constraining, I do not think that all imaginative responses are appropriate. Imagination let loose can lead to the manipulation of the aesthetic object for one's own pleasure-seeking ends. With art, the narrative of a novel or characterization determines the imaginative response to some extent. With natural objects such explicit guidance is absent, so on what grounds is it possible to distinguish imaginings tied to the object from those which are not? In some ways this seems an impossible task; a solution to the problem is difficult to find even for art.²¹ However, it is possible to specify ways in which imagination need not lead to aesthetic appreciation that trivializes and instrumentalizes nature, and thus to show that imaginative engagement can provide a valuable alternative to the scientific approach.

The close connection between perception and imagination in the aesthetic response provides some help in distinguishing appropriate from inappropriate imaginings. Wyeth's response to the seashell involves an imaginative component that is guided by attention to perceptual qualities and the recognition that the object comes from the sea. But problems arise if we depend solely on the connection between imagination and perception because some imaginings can be so tentatively tied to perceptual qualities as to become inappropriate because they are irrelevant. For example, when coming upon Beachy Head, a high cliff on the south coast of England, one is awestruck by the dramatic, sheer drop to the sea, and this feeling is heightened by the knowledge that this is a favorite suicide spot. Imagining the feeling of jumping off the cliff and the fear of someone standing at the top of it accentuates the sublimity of the place. But this train of images would become irrelevant to aesthetic appreciation of the cliff if one then imagined several possibilities, such as financial difficulties, which might serve as a motive for suicide.

Also, although many images evoked by an object are obviously connected to its perceptual properties, as in the example above of the tree as an old man, there will be cases when particular imaginings are appropriate even if this is not so. Some valuable uses of imagination do not emerge through attention to perceptual properties alone. Aldo Leopold's appreciation of a mountain as wild and majestic is achieved through "thinking like a mountain," or a sort of empathetic, imaginative identification with the mountain.²²

So despite the fact that perception helps to guide our imaginings, reliance on the link between imagination and perception alone will not serve to distinguish appropriate from inappropriate imaginings. To remedy this, I suggest two guidelines: the first is disinterestedness; while the second is characterized by comparing imagination to a virtue, so that we "imagine well" when we use imagination skillfully and appropriately according to the context of aesthetic appreciation. These guidelines are intended to be flexible, since inflexibility will conflict with the range of responses demanded by the diversity of natural objects and percipients.

The first guideline, disinterestedness, characterizes aesthetic appreciation as non-practical and non-instrumental. Adherence to this guideline eliminates the danger of self-indulgence by the imaginative subject. It might be argued that there is a tension between the active engagement of the subject's imagination and the detachment often associated with disinterestedness. However, disinterestedness does not entail cool, distanced detachment, rather it requires detachment from self-interested concerns, and it does not follow from this that the percipient's aesthetic response is passive.²³ Properly understood, it is the active detachment of disinterestedness that clears the ground for the free activity of imagination, but it is also what keeps it in check, thereby preventing self-indulgent imaginative responses. In freeing the mind from self-interested and instrumental concerns, imagination can underpin appropriate appreciation of the aesthetic object. Disinterestedness checks any thoughts or imaginings that stray from an aesthetic focus in my appreciation of the seascape, such as fantasizing about the abundance of shells I might collect if the waves were not so big.

The first guideline specifically addresses the concern that the use of imagination leads to self-indulgence, while the second targets irrelevant imaginings. The second guideline requires a more active role by the percipient in that she or he is expected to "imagine well." Just as keen rather than slack perception enables the discovery of aesthetic value in a wasteland, imagination can be used effectively or ineffectively in the context of aesthetic appreciation. An analogy to virtue is helpful for explaining how to "imagine well." For Aristotle, virtue is not a natural capacity, but rather it is learned and acquired through practice. We reach a comfortable point where we exercise a virtue as a matter of habit. Imagination too is developed through practice, and it gains a habitual footing just like virtue. We can begin to see how an effective use of imagination might develop, but how exactly would such a use sort relevant from irrelevant imaginings? An important aspect of virtue provides an answer to this question. The proper assessment of the context or

situation of the moral problem (using practical reason), as well as practice, provides the foundation of the appropriate virtue. In the aesthetic context, imagination is mobilized and exercised according to the demands of the aesthetic object, so that we become able to determine the irrelevance of, for example, some of the Beachy Head imaginings. “Imagining well” involves spotting aesthetic potential, having a sense of what to look for, and knowing when to clip the wings of imagination. This last skill involves preventing the irrelevance of shallow, naive, and sentimental imaginative responses, which might impoverish rather than enrich appreciation.²⁴ Imagining a lamb dressed up in baby clothes might underline the aesthetic truth of innocence, but it is sentimental and shallow, and it fails to direct an appreciation appropriately. Such discriminations are not always easy to make nor by any means clear-cut, but through practice it is possible to develop the skill of keeping imaginings on track.²⁵

V.

Supported by these guidelines, imagination, together with perception, can provide the framework for an alternative model that has several advantages over the science-based model. First, it provides a framework for aesthetic appreciation of nature that is based in familiar aesthetic sources: perception, imagination, and disinterestedness. In contrast to scientific knowledge, perception and imagination provide a framework that is clearly aesthetic and that, in the practical context, makes aesthetic value distinguishable from other environmental values, for example, ecological, historical, and cultural. Another advantage lies in the alternative model’s freedom from the constraints of scientific knowledge because imagination and perception facilitate aesthetic rather than intellectual attention, and also because this approach does not require specific knowledge from the percipient. This is especially important in the practical context where environmental decision-making involves a wide variety of individuals who enter into the deliberative process with more or less expertise. The alternative model is more inclusive, more open to the aesthetic experiences of inhabitants, visitors, developers, local government, etc., in working out the best solution. My guidelines show how inappropriate imaginings are avoided and, in the practical context, they point to possible agreement in aesthetic judgements within the framework of perception and imagination. Arbitrary and self-interested imaginings are precluded by the guidelines, which makes it easier to settle disputes in the deliberative process.²⁶

Notes

- 1 By “natural object” I do not mean objects that have never been touched by human beings, as is sometimes argued when “natural” is equated with “wilderness.” When using the term “natural” here I recognize the inevitability of some human role in the

genesis of much of what we call “nature,” from the significant role played by humans in the creation of an artificial lake or an English hedgerow, to the (arguably) negligible role in Greenland’s icescapes. Acknowledgment of the human role is likely to be a component of the background knowledge we bring to any particular aesthetic encounter with nature.

- 2 In this paper I shall focus on Allen Carlson’s science-based model since it is the most developed of them. See various papers by Carlson, including: “Appreciation and the Natural Environment,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1979): 267-276 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 2]; “Nature, Aesthetic Judgment, and Objectivity,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 40 (1981): 15-27; “Nature and Positive Aesthetics,” *Environmental Ethics* 6 (1984): 5-34; “Nature, Aesthetic Appreciation, and Knowledge,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53 (1995): 393-400; and his book, *Aesthetics and the Environment: The Appreciation of Nature, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2000). Other versions of the model can be found in Marcia Muelder Eaton, “Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 149-156 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 9], and in *Merit, Aesthetic and Ethical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Holmes Rolston III, “Does Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature Need to be Science-Based?” *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 35 (1995): 374-386. [Editors’ Note: See also Holmes Rolston III, “The Aesthetic Experience of Forests,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 157-166 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 10].]
- 3 Examples of nonscience-based approaches include Ronald Hepburn, “Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty,” in *British Analytical Philosophy*, ed. Bernard Williams and Alan Montefiore (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 285-310, reprinted in Ronald Hepburn, *Wonder and other Essays* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984) [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 1]; and Arnold Berleant: *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992) [Editors’ Note: Chapter 11 of *Aesthetics of Environment*, “The Aesthetics of Art and Nature,” is reprinted in this volume, Chapter 3]; “The Aesthetics of Art and Nature,” in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, eds. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 228-243; and *Living in the Landscape: Towards an Aesthetics of Environment* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997). Related views include Stan Godlovitch’s mystery model (see Stan Godlovitch, “Icebreakers: Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics,” *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 11 (1994): 15-30 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 5]); and Noël Carroll’s arousal model (see Noël Carroll, “On Being Moved by Nature: Between Religion and Natural History,” in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts* [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 4]).
- 4 Kendall Walton, “Categories of Art,” *The Philosophical Review* 79 (1970): 334-367.
- 5 Carlson, “Nature and Positive Aesthetics,” p. 26.
- 6 Carlson, “Nature, Aesthetic Appreciation and Knowledge,” p. 399. For Carroll’s quote, see Carroll, “On Being Moved by Nature,” p. 253 [this volume, p. 97].

- 7 Carlson, "Nature and Positive Aesthetics," p. 26.
- 8 See Carlson, "Nature, Aesthetic Appreciation, and Knowledge," pp. 394-395. The two models he criticizes are Godlovitch's mystery model and Carroll's arousal model (see note 3 above).
- 9 For some excellent remarks on the drawbacks of a formalist approach to aesthetic appreciation of nature, see Ronald Hepburn, "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, pp. 72-73.
- 10 I should point out that scientific knowledge might expand appreciation as well. If my companion tells me that the wave is an aspect of a great lake, I might appreciate the wave as more spectacular due to my surprise that a lake could create such big waves. These additional beliefs expand my perception and add to appreciation. But this is only a minor concession to the science-based approach because I maintain that scientific knowledge is not a necessary condition of appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature.
- 11 For Carlson's defense of his model in this context, see Carlson, "Nature and Positive Aesthetics."
- 12 I should note that Carlson does not support a dry scientific approach as the model of aesthetic experience. He has argued for the active, engaged, and disinterested approach of the aesthetic standpoint. Nonetheless, his condition of the correct scientific category stands, and he is critical of a strongly subjective stance. See Allen Carlson, "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, pp. 203-205; and Allen Carlson, "Aesthetics and Engagement," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 33 (1993): 222-227.
- 13 See Allen Carlson, "Environmental Aesthetics," *A Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. D. Cooper (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992), pp. 142-143.
- 14 Ronald Hepburn, "Nature in the Light of Art," *Wonder and Other Essays* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), p. 51.
- 15 See John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee Books, 1934), p. 40.
- 16 Sometimes finding aesthetic value in a wasteland is impossible without the help of someone who has had more experience of the landscape. As is often the case with art, sometimes we fail to find aesthetic value for ourselves and rely on others to direct us to aesthetic qualities we have not discovered. Here I have in mind something like Sibley's seven critical activities (see Frank Sibley, "Aesthetic Concepts," *The Philosophical Review* 67 (1959): 421-450), although I do not agree that appropriate appreciation of art or nature requires the expertise of an art critic or naturalist, respectively. The guidance of a companion who has viewed the artwork before or is familiar with the landscape may be sufficient for the discovery of aesthetic qualities.
- 17 Hepburn, "Nature in the Light of Art," p. 47.
- 18 My use of the term imagination is intended to include a range of imagination's capacities, from visualizing powers to imagination's more inventive capacities such as make-believe and imagining possibilities. I include here those powers that do not depend on visualizing and having mental images.
- 19 The *exploratory*, *projective*, and *ampliative* modes of imagination are loosely bor-

- rowed from Anthony Savile who discusses them in relation to narrative paintings. See Anthony Savile, *Aesthetic Reconstructions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988). The fourth, *revelatory* imagination, is my own, but it shares some ideas with John Ruskin's views in *Modern Painters* [1846], edited and abridged by David Barrie (London: Pilkington Press, 2000), see Volume II, Section II.
- 20 These remarks are from an interview with Andrew Wyeth in Wanda Corn, *The Art of Andrew Wyeth* (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1973), p. 55. I am grateful to Fran Speed for this quotation.
 - 21 Some useful ways to sort relevant from irrelevant imaginings are suggested by Ronald Hepburn, "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," and "Landscape and the Metaphysical Imagination," *Environmental Values* 5 (1996): 191-204 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 6]. In the context of art, see R.K. Elliott, "Imagination in the Experience of Art," *Philosophy and the Arts: Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures*, Volume 6, 1971-1972 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), pp. 88-105; and Peter Lamarque, "In and Out of Imaginary Worlds," *Virtue and Taste*, eds. John Skorupski and Dudley Knowles, *Philosophical Quarterly Supplementary Series*, Volume 2 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).
 - 22 Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 129.
 - 23 My view of disinterestedness is based (loosely) in Kant's discussion of the concept, in which disinterestedness is opposed to particular kinds of interest, namely, self-interest and practical interest, where in both cases we wish to use the object as a means to some end (whether that end is pleasure or utility). Understood in these terms, the logic of disinterestedness does not entail abstraction or passive contemplation, but only that we value the object for its aesthetic qualities rather than how it might serve our ends. I have argued elsewhere that as a condition of aesthetic appreciation, disinterestedness requires that we set aside what we *want*, but not who we are. In this respect disinterestedness guides imagination by precluding self-indulgence without excluding "embedded" or "situated" aspects of the perceiver. See Emily Brady, "Don't Eat the Daisies: Disinterestedness and the Situated Aesthetic," *Environmental Values* 7 (1998): 97-114.
 - 24 See also Hepburn, "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," for issues related to this point.
 - 25 I expand on my defense of imagination and its appropriateness in aesthetic appreciation of nature in Emily Brady, *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).
 - 26 I am grateful to Jane Howarth, Arnold Berleant, and Allen Carlson for their comments on drafts of this essay.

Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature

Marcia Muelder Eaton



I.

In 1995, the Baltimore Aquarium opened a coral reef exhibition. The curator was interviewed on CNN and said that she believed that if people see how beautiful such ecosystems are they will tend to act in ways that will better protect these and other environments. If it is true that positive aesthetic response leads to care, it is important for us to learn how to generate aesthetic responses. But it is also important for us to learn how to produce the right sort of care—for there is plenty of evidence that some actions that many people interpret as “caring for the landscape” are not sustainable: mowing with small gasoline engines or fertilizing with chemicals that pollute the ground water. What we must aim for is generating aesthetic response that will lead to sustainable care.

Within philosophical aesthetics, a debate has recently arisen concerning appreciation of nature. This debate centers on questions concerning what it is to have an aesthetic experience of nature and when this experience is of the right sort. How does one know that one’s appreciation of a mountain or river or wetland or pine forest is aesthetic? How is it similar to, or different from, say, a religious or scientific or economic or artistic experience? And, given that one can tell that one is in fact having an aesthetic experience (and not some other kind), are there any ways of determining whether some aesthetic experiences of nature are “better” than others? Are some aesthetic experiences appropriate and others inappropriate? Some right, some wrong, some good, some bad? Do these distinctions make any sense at all? Does it make sense, for example, to say to someone, “This is the way you *ought* to experience nature”?

II.

These questions have, of course, been answered in a variety of ways. Here I want to talk about two sides of the debate. On the one hand is what I call the cognitive model of nature appreciation, on the other hand the imaginative model.

The cognitive model has best been presented, I believe, in the writings of Allen Carlson. Since appreciation of nature must be directed at nature, Carlson argues

that aesthetic appreciation of nature must be directed by knowledge about it. The kind of knowledge necessary is that provided by ecology, namely understanding of different environmental systems and their interactions.¹ In general, he believes, aesthetic experience consists of scrutiny of an object and a response based upon it. In the case of aesthetic appreciation of nature, the scrutiny is based upon, and enriched by, scientific understanding of the workings of nature; without that one cannot be certain that one's response is to nature and not to something else.²

Many people, even those who greatly admire the contributions Carlson has made to environmental aesthetics, believe that the cognitive model is over-intellectualized. Noël Carroll, for example, objects that Carlson fails to give an adequate role to emotion; Stan Godlovitch objects that Carlson fails to give an adequate role to mystery. Arnold Berleant is concerned that Carlson's view does not sufficiently provide for what he calls engagement. Cheryl Foster believes that the cognitive model leaves out meditative response that is important in our experiences of nature.³

Emily Brady argues that Carlson fails to account for the significance of imagination in our experiences of nature. And it is this last alleged misgiving that I want to discuss. For, I believe, one manifestation of imagination—fiction—plays an enormous role in shaping the way a culture perceives and conceives the environment. Myths and legends have shaped attitudes and beliefs about nature and, by implication, about life in general. Nature is a source of revelation—as we are told in the introduction to the Finnish classic, the *Kalevale*.

There are yet other words too
and mysteries learned—
snatched from the roadside
plucked from the heather
torn from the brushwood
tugged from the saplings
rubbed from a grass-head
ripped from a footpath ...

Designers, managers, and theorists must give due attention to ways in which fiction and other art forms shape thought in our efforts to establish successful and sustainable practices. Much great art results from flights of the imagination stimulated by nature; we treasure these artworks but will fail to develop strategies for saving and creating sustainable landscapes if we lack understanding of the role that artistic culture plays in shaping human attitudes toward the environment. How might we connect the cognitive model that Carlson champions and the imagination model that Brady insists upon?

Brady believes that Carlson is just one in a long line of Western thinkers to overlook or demean the important contribution that imagination plays. Imagination has undoubtedly received a “bad rap” in the history of Western thought. Eurocentric

culture with its interest in developing a science that provides for universal intersubjective agreement based on shared methodology and rules of evidence has not given much direct credit to the role of free flights of fancy.⁴ There are signs that this is changing. More attention is being given, for example, to the contribution of creative imagination in scientific discovery. In moral philosophy the role of imagination is increasingly discussed; it is argued that the ability to imagine oneself in another's shoes is central to moral development, for instance. Brady hopes that she can contribute to an improved status for imagination within the aesthetics of nature.⁵

Aesthetic appreciation of nature, she asserts, is directed at natural objects, and she conceives natural objects as objects that are not products of human creation. In so defining these objects, Brady makes a very common mistake—namely, the mistake of leaving human beings out of nature. Like many writers she seems to think that there is something more “natural” about a beehive than an apartment building. If she were correct, there would be few forests, for example, that would count as natural, for, like more and more landscapes (not to mention cityscapes), human intervention, both lethal and beneficial, has left few that are not to some degree a product of human creation. This mistake does not have much impact on Brady's discussion. I mention it because I think it is important for theorists in all fields to remind ourselves that humans are natural.

Brady construes *imagination* broadly—just as for the purposes of this essay I shall construe *fiction* broadly as referring to objects created by and appealing to the imagination. She interprets imagining not just as making believe, but as visualizing or otherwise coming up with ranges of possibilities. She agrees with Immanuel Kant's position that central to human aesthetic pleasure is what he called a “free play of imagination.” Aesthetic experiences are marked, he argued, by disinterestedness. We put aside ordinary scientific, ethical, or personal interests and respond to objects as we please. We allow our imaginations full rein. We are free to think of a tree as a person or an animal or a tower or a mountain or whatever. And this freedom gives us, according to Kant, tremendous pleasure. Brady agrees.

Like Carlson, Brady believes that basic distinctions between objects of art and objects of nature generate important distinctions between artistic and natural appreciation. “Various natural objects ... lack a human maker, an artist, and also an artistic context in respect of the type of artwork.”⁶ In artworks, intentional acts of an artist give us cues that direct our attention and thus our imagination. These cues are not present in natural objects. Thus, following Kant, the response is additionally free—free from any concern about what it is intended to express or how it functions as an object. Distinguishing natural from artistic objects as she does, Brady is perhaps correct to point out that human responses to nature do not involve considerations about artistic intentions. But this distinction does not, I think, also entail that information about context is either nonexistent or irrelevant. Indeed, knowledge concerning how natural objects function within a particular context is

exactly the sort of thing that Carlson and I insist plays a major role in appreciation of nature. It is precisely a failure to understand the proper function of certain kinds of trees or forest soils, for instance, within their specific biosystems (i.e., context) that has led to mismanagement of forests even when providing aesthetic value has been one goal. The concern to protect forests from fires because burned out areas are usually seen as ugly has meant that plants whose growth is stimulated in burned and blackened soil that warms more quickly in the spring sun have become rarer.

Brady herself discusses the role of context. With respect to nature, imagination is required fully to appreciate changeability and context. I agree. One imagines what a forest looked like before the fire and what it will look like through various stages of succession. Thinking about the consequences of destroying the tiny remainder of old growth forests in the northwestern United States surely requires imagination. But it requires informed imagination. I shall say more about this later when I discuss Brady's concept of what she calls "imagining well."

The contextual aspect of our experiences of nature deserves another kind of consideration. In general, one is more immersed in nature than in art, for one literally moves through it. (This is also true of course, of some artworks, e.g., sculptural and architectural artifacts.) And the ways in which people move deserve serious attention. J.B. Jackson has discussed how different aesthetic experiences are from a horse and buggy than from an automobile.⁷ Recently Kevin Melchionne has written about the history of "walking." Though people have, of course, always walked, the practice of nature walking has not been the same in all times and all places. What counts as "a good walk" differs even among people reading this essay. For some of us, for instance, it will be much shorter than for others! In certain periods solitary walking has been considered more beneficial than walking with a companion. The former places higher premium on personal therapy, the latter on sociability. Is it better to go from point A to point B and back to point A on the same route or to make a circuit? Should one repeat the same route day after day so that one can notice nuances of change through seasons or strive for the totally unexpected? What is the proper pace? To what extent did walking as an aesthetic activity develop only after walking became a leisure, not a necessary, activity?⁸ I have American friends who report that on some mountain trails in California one not only meets more and more people, but meets more and more people who all seem to have bought their walking costumes at the same designer shop!

Brady is primarily interested in the special ways in which immersion stimulates imagination, for imagination "intensifies" experience. It plays exploratory, projective, ampliative, and revelatory roles, according to Brady. Surely she is right about this. There are, admittedly, many positive roles that imagination can play in aesthetic appreciation of nature. Many ecologists describe the aesthetic experiences that drew them to their work in the first place. Many of these undoubtedly involved imaginings—thinking of a tree as a castle or a clearing as a fort. I well remember what was, when I was a child, probably a very small

thicket (I still think of it as quite large, of course) that served as the jungle where we midwestern Americans fought off a variety of foreign enemies. What harm could there have been in thinking that dread poisonous snakes lurked under the blackberry bushes? Or that not only an enemy soldier but a tiger might at any moment spring from behind the elm tree? Who really cares that tigers and elm trees do not share the same biotic patches?

And surely rich imagination is just what is needed if we are to develop new metaphors for designing sustainable landscapes. The clichés that we have inherited from romantic visions of the picturesque no longer work; indeed, they often work against development of ecologically sound landscape designs. New visions are required, and this in turn requires creative imagination.

III.

So what do I have against imagination or fiction in the appreciation of nature? Let me begin to explain my concern by quoting a couple of examples of Brady's own imaginative flights:

In contemplating the bark of a locust tree, visually, I see the deep clefts between the thick ridges of the bark. Images of mountains and valleys come to mind, and I think of the age of the tree given the thickness of the ridges and how they are spaced apart. I walk around the tree, feeling the wide circumference of the bark. The image of a seasoned old man comes to mind, with deep wrinkles from age. These imaginings lead to an aesthetic description of the tree as stalwart, and I respect it as I might a wise old sage. My interpretation of the locust tree is tied to its nonaesthetic qualities, such as the texture of the bark, and associations spawned by perceptual qualities.⁹

And a second example:

A quick glance at a lamb reveals little except an acknowledgment of its sweetness. But the fuller participation of perception and imagination can lead to a truth about innocence. Contemplating the fresh whiteness of a lamb and its small fragile stature evokes images of purity and naiveté. It is through dwelling aesthetically and imaginatively on such natural things that we achieve new insight.¹⁰

Brady, we see, believes that aesthetic experience, interpreted in terms of imagination, provides us, as she puts it, with "insight" into the tree and the lamb. The cognitive model of aesthetic appreciation of nature in its restrictiveness precludes access to the richness of imaginative insight, she fears. These insights amount to what she calls "aesthetic truths," but she fails adequately to explain these. Furthermore, if there are aesthetic truths, there should also be aesthetic falsities. Brady

does not give examples of these. She does, however, maintain that some imaginative responses are “appropriate,” so perhaps aesthetic falsity is related to responses that are inappropriate. As an example of an inappropriate response she points to actions that are “self-indulgent.”¹¹ Appropriate responses involve what she calls “imagining well.” “Imagining well,” she says, “involves spotting aesthetic potential, having a sense of what to look for, and knowing when to clip the wings of imagination. This last skill involves preventing the irrelevance of shallow, naive, and sentimental imaginative responses, which might impoverish rather than enrich appreciation.”¹²

But let us go back to her own examples. Is responding to a little white lamb by reflections on innocence or to a tree as a stalwart man or haggard witch appropriate? Are these responses such that they indicate a sense of what to look for? Do they avoid being shallow or naive? I see no way of answering these questions without relying on the kind of cognitive model that Carlson insists upon. Knowledge does not simply deepen the experiences that imagination provides; it directs them, or should direct them if we hope to preserve and design sustainable landscapes. Concepts such as imagining *well* make no sense unless one knows what the object is that one is talking about, something (in fact, as much as possible) about the object, and something (in fact, as much as possible) about the context in which the object is found.

On the face of it, of course, it seems quite harmless, even charming, to think about trees in terms of human faces or lambs in terms of purity. But, in fact, imaginative fancies—often directed by fictional creations—can and do lead to harmful actions. Fiction, for example, has played an important role in shaping the attitudes, images, and metaphors with which we approach nature. Perhaps the most striking example of the way in which art informs responses to nature is *Bambi*—a book written in 1923 by the Austrian writer Felix Salten. The Walt Disney film version is, of course, a classic. Both the book and movie contain much that is beautiful and in other ways valuable. Many passages and images make it easy to understand why the literary classic has achieved such worldwide popularity that it is hard for anyone to look at a deer and not see Bambi. It has also made it incredibly difficult to look at a deer in terms that are true to it as an object on its own and even more difficult to respond to it in terms appropriate to the role that it increasingly plays in the ecological systems it has come to dominate. In the United States, most states’ departments of natural resources have had as a primary goal preserving and providing deer in sufficient numbers to satisfy hunters. Landscape architects have tended to exacerbate the situation with their preference for defined edges, and have thus also contributed to an increase in forest edge. Such planning has been carried out with a great deal of disregard for organisms other than game animals and birds. The result has been an explosion in the deer population and a decrease in the population of several songbirds and tree species. We are told, in fact, that in some areas deer have become vermin. But how can one look at a deer or a picture of a deer and not imagine it as the innocent, noble creature that Salten depicts? We tend

to respond as the fictional account directs us to respond. In the book we are given the following episode, for example. Bambi and his mother see a ferret kill a mouse. Frightened by the violence, Bambi asks his mother if they will kill a mouse.

“No,” replied his mother.

“Never?” asked Bambi?

“Never,” came the answer.

“Why not?” asked Bambi, relieved.

“Because we never kill anything,” said his mother.¹³

This is valuable if one wants to teach children not to be violent, but totally false if one wants to teach children about the actual effect of overpopulation of deer in the forest.

The prose of the story is often beautiful and does, as Brady hopes, heighten insight about the forest. There are beautiful inventories—ones in which vivid images and metaphors certainly help children learn to observe details and connect individual species into an organic whole. But Salten contrasts the gentle deer with the vulgar species that fight for food. Deer, we are told, never fight for food, because there is enough for all. We are seduced into a sentimental image that is hard to shake. Even in the presence of trees ravaged by deer, who in their own way do indeed fight for food, we continue to think of all deer as Bambis, the consequence being that forest managers find it difficult to convince the public that their numbers should be severely decreased in some areas.¹⁴

In fiction there is often a tendency to sentimentalize. There is also a tendency to demonize. Both result in misconceptions. Just as there are lots of deceptively innocent creatures in literature and the other arts, so are there lots of monsters. One reason that it is hard to get people to appreciate wetlands is that they have so often been conceptualized as “swamps” inhabited by various kinds of slime monsters.¹⁵ Death by drowning in quicksand was a common fear even for those of us who grew up in the heart of the U.S. cornbelt. Should lions flourish in numbers great enough to threaten the environment, a hard sell will be required for the generation that watches *The Lion King* several times a year. In his recent book, *Land Mosaics*, Richard Forman discusses the importance of protecting “keystone” species—species that play a central role in an ecosystem.¹⁶ One keystone species that he describes is the cassowary bird. He writes,

This territorial bird, as tall as and able to rip the guts out of a man, is believed to be the only seed disperser for more than one hundred species of woody tropical rainforest plants in Queensland, Australia. The bird normally inhabits large forests. Logging and fragmentation have eliminated the bird from several areas where only small remnants remain. Consequently, a progressive and massive

loss of trees and other woody species can now be expected, unless the big bird can adapt or adjust its behavior.¹⁷

Although I do not yet know this for certain, I would guess that the regional fiction depicts the cassowary bird as a terrible monster. If so, it will be harder to save this bird.

As I have already said, I do not want to claim that there is no positive role for fiction—for imagination in general—in developing a sound nature aesthetic. I do insist that it must be based upon, tempered by, directed and enriched by solid ecological knowledge. As I have acknowledged, there are indeed many benefits accruing to creative imagination. Judith H. Heerwage and Gordon H. Orians have described what they believe are three stages in the examination of unfamiliar landscapes:¹⁸

1. One decides whether to explore or move on.
2. If one decides to stay and explore, one then begins to gather information.
3. Finally one decides whether to stay longer or move on.

It may very well be that flights of imagination—seeing an old man's face in the bark of a tree, for example—is an important factor at the first stage. Even being intrigued deceptively by a man-eating bird may be what leads one to learn more about the cassowary.

Furthermore, developing imagination is probably essential in producing people who are able to envision new and more successful ways of designing and maintaining environments. Many ecologists have called for new metaphors that will generate more effective management strategies. Edward O. Wilson, in *The Biophilia Hypothesis*, asserts that humans are genetically inclined to respond positively to nonthreatening nature.¹⁹ Studies at the University of Washington have shown that views of nature can reduce stress in prisoners and surgical patients.²⁰ Relief from stress enables us to rest and regroup, so there may be genetic reasons that we prefer savannas to wetlands. Education, therefore, will be required to make people see that the latter are also valuable. A good exercise to give to ourselves and our students would be suggesting and designing ways of providing information about the cassowary that would create and stimulate imaginative images that would help to protect it. Forman believes that different species respond to different scales.²¹ We have, of course, designed and managed for the human scale response, often at the disservice of other species. A vivid imagination may be necessary to enable humans to expand the scales to which they respond aesthetically.

Our attitudes toward nature are largely determined by the metaphors with which we conceptualize it; many of these have come to us from literature and the other arts. We have the tree, the spring, the seed, the waters of life. We categorize in terms of light and dark, sun and moon, heaven and earth. We are warned not to lose the forest for the trees. We strive to reach rock bottom or to get at the root of the

problem in order for ideas to blossom. Imaginatively developing new metaphors may indeed allow us, as it has sometimes been put, to “think outside of the box.” Fiction is of great use here. But this does not mean that there should be no restrictions on the imagination. As we have seen, fiction can sentimentalize and demonize, with serious harm resulting. If sustainable environments are the goal, then fiction must be at the service of fact.

IV.

Some may object that there are sustainable environments in which what we think of as scientific knowledge seems to have played no role. I am willing to admit that the priority of the cognitive model is not universally required for an adequate nature aesthetic. Aesthetic planning, like ecological planning, will always be site specific. There are societies that work quite well in the absence of technological societies’ way of doing science. Colin Turnbull tells of his own foolish tendency to read all responses to nature with his own Western eyes. Once while in the Congo he heard a strange noise at night and went to explore.

There in a tiny clearing, splashed with silver, was the sophisticated Kenge, clad in black cloth, adorned with leaves, with a flower tucked into his hair. He was all alone, dancing around and singing softly to himself as he gazed up at the treetops. Now Kenge was the biggest flirt for miles, so, after watching a while, I asked, jokingly why he was dancing alone. He stopped, turned slowly around, and looked at me as though I was the biggest fool he had ever seen; and he was plainly surprised by my stupidity. “But I’m *not* dancing alone,” he said. “I’m dancing with the forest, dancing with the moon.” Then, with the utmost unconcern, he ignored me and continued his dance of love and life.²²

I am not worried about the precedence of imagination in such cultural aesthetic responses to nature. But where stewardship is viewed almost exclusively in terms of developing adequate technologies, I see no choice but to insist that fancy take off from a solid knowledge base.

It is often objected that insisting upon a scientific basis for appreciation of nature “takes all the fun out of it.” The ecologist Evile Gorham has complained to me (in private conversation) that he does not want to be told a lot about Jane Austen’s life or special literary techniques—he just wants to read her books. Many people feel this way about nature. As Wordsworth put it, “We murder to dissect.”²³

I confess that I simply do not believe that knowledge kills aesthetic pleasure. Looking closely, for instance, is not detrimental to aesthetic experience, it increases it. Elsewhere I have argued that aesthetic interest is not separate from our other interests as human beings.²⁴ We go back and forth, as it were, between contemplating the object of attention and thinking about other things. I look at a pine bog,

think about the way the water is being drained, remember my grandmother's cranberry sauce, delight in the shades of green. Knowledge of the variety of species is likely to draw one's attention to the variety of colors, not detract from them. Sometimes a sense of wonder, even mystery, comes only when we have knowledge, for example, learn that the Minnesota trout lily grows only in two Minnesota counties and nowhere else on earth. Even knowing the names of different flowers may lead one to see the flowers. As Edward Abbey writes: "Through naming comes knowing; we grasp an object, mentally by giving it a name—hension, prehension, apprehension. And thus through language we create a whole world, corresponding to the other world out there."²⁵ In learning what to look for, we achieve the very possibility of seeing—and seeing is surely essential to an aesthetic experience. Seeing something is more likely if we look for it, and we look for it only if we know where and what to look for. John Tester gives the following vivid example.

Lowland hardwood forests occur through Minnesota on sites where the soil is periodically saturated. These forests are dominated by American elm and black ash. Slippery elm, rock elm, basswood, burr oak, hackberry, yellow birch, green ash, aspen, balsam poplar, and paper birch may also be present. Fire is rare in these forests, and wind-through and flooding occur occasionally. They are considered late-successional communities.²⁶

If I know that a forest area has been free of disturbances, I may start looking for a yellow birch. And looking, I may find and enjoy the face in the bark.

Even if it were true that knowledge takes some of the fun out, it would be worth the price. For only with knowledge will sustainable practices develop. Without legislating against fiction—indeed in full recognition of the benefits of imagination—one must constantly be aware of its possible harm. I certainly do not advocate that we stop reading or watching *Bambi*. I do advocate that when we do so we remind ourselves and others that it is just a story and that it needs to be balanced with an understanding of the relation between an increasing deer population and a decreasing songbird population.

Finally, we must ask whether the cognitive model deprives the aesthetic of something distinctive. Brady worries that too great a reliance on knowledge will not "provide a framework that is clearly aesthetic and that, in the practical context, makes aesthetic value distinguishable from other environmental values, for example, ecological, historical, and cultural."²⁷ I do not think the cognitive model gives away the store to any of these other values. I have elsewhere characterized the aesthetic as attention to intrinsic properties of objects or events (and I would include natural objects and events) that are considered worthy of that attention within a particular culture. As long as knowledge directs perception of, and reflection upon, such intrinsic properties, the experience will be recognizably aesthetic. At the same time, I have also urged that we not try to carve out a unique niche for the aesthetic. Human valuings are holistic; we rarely experience something purely

aesthetically or purely ethically or purely religiously or purely scientifically, etc.²⁸ Thus I am far less worried than Brady is that knowledge will get in the way of aesthetic experiences.

The task for all of us is to develop ways of using the delight that human beings take in flights of imagination, connect it to solid cognitive understanding of what makes for sustainable environments, and thus produce the kind of attitudes and preferences that will generate the kind of care we hope for.

Notes

- 1 Allen Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1979): 267-276 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 2].
- 2 Allen Carlson, "Nature, Aesthetic Appreciation, and Knowledge," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53 (1995): 393-400.
- 3 Cheryl Foster, "The Narrative and the Ambient in Environmental Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 127-137 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 11]; Noël Carroll, "On Being Moved by Nature: Between Religion and Natural History," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and The Arts*, eds. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 4]; Stan Godlovitch, "Icebreakers: Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics," *The Journal of Applied Philosophy* 11 (1994): 15-30 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 5]; and the exchange between Allen Carlson and Arnold Berleant, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52 (1994): 237-241.
- 4 See Dan Flory, *Imagination* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1996).
- 5 Emily Brady, "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 139-147 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 8].
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 139 [this volume, p. 156].
- 7 J.B. Jackson, "The Abstract World of the Hot-Rodder," in *Landscapes: Selected Writings of J.B. Jackson*, ed. Ervin H. Zube (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970), p. 147.
- 8 Kevin Melchionne, "Towards a Poetics of Walking" (unpublished paper).
- 9 Brady, "Imagination," p. 143 [this volume, p. 162].
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 144 [this volume, p. 163].
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 145 [this volume, p. 165].
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 146 [this volume, p. 166].
- 13 Felix Salten, *Bambi*, trans. Whittaker Chambers (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1928), p. 16.
- 14 For a more extensive discussion of the role *Bambi* has played in shaping views toward nature, see Ralph H. Lutts, "The Trouble with *Bambi*," *Forest and Conservation History* 4 (1992): 160-171.
- 15 Philip Terry, "The Sublime, the Beautiful, and the Swamp: Getting the Humanities into Environmental Studies" (unpublished paper).

- 16 Richard Forman, *Land Mosaics: The Ecology of Landscapes and Regions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
- 17 Ibid., p. 47.
- 18 Judith H. Heerwage and Gordon H. Orians, "Humans, Habitats, and Aesthetics," in *The Biophilia Hypothesis*, ed. Edward O. Wilson (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1993), p. 143.
- 19 Wilson, *The Biophilia Hypothesis*.
- 20 Peter Kahn and Batja Freidman, "Room with an Augmented Window": www.ischool.washington.edu/roomwithaview.
- 21 Forman, *Land Mosaics*, p. 10.
- 22 Colin Turnbull, *The Forest People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), p. 272.
- 23 William Wordsworth, *The Tables Turned* [1798], verse 7, line 4.
- 24 Marcia Muelder Eaton, "Where's the Spear? The Nature of Aesthetic Relevance," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 32 (1992): 1-12.
- 25 Edward Abbey, "Terra Incognita: Into the Maze," in *Desert Solitaire* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988), p. 243. I am grateful to Bob J. Frye for this citation.
- 26 John Tester, *Minnesota's Natural Heritage* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 75.
- 27 Brady, "Imagination," p. 146 [this volume, p. 166].
- 28 For a discussion of this point, see Marcia Muelder Eaton, "Where's the Spear?" and "The Intrinsic, Non-Supervenient Nature of Aesthetic Properties," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52 (1994): 383-397.

The Aesthetic Experience of Forests

Holmes Rolston III



I. The Forest as an Archetype

Like the sea or the sky, the forest is a kind of archetype of the foundations of the world. The forest represents—more literally it re-presents, presents again to those who enter it—the elemental forces of nature. Such experience serves well as instance and prototype of the aesthetic appreciation of nature.

Forests bear the signature of time and eternity. Forests take one back through the centuries; or, put another way, they bring the historic and prehistoric past forward for present encounter. This is grander time than most persons usually realize, but that ancient past is subliminally there; confronting forest giants we realize that trees live on radically different scales of time than do we. Trees have no sense of duration, experienced time; they nevertheless endure.

Forests take time by the decades and centuries, compared to the way humans take time by the days and years. The scale is at once of incremental and vast time; in a forest there is seldom any front-page news—perhaps a fire or a storm—but most of life goes on over larger time frames. Trees do not grow overnight; the big oaks in New England were there at the founding of the Republic. The towering Douglas firs in the Pacific Northwest were seedlings when Columbus sailed; sequoias can predate the launching of Christianity.

This becomes deep time. Paleontologically, forests go back three to four hundred million years. Land plants first appeared in the Silurian Period and remained close to the ground, like mosses and liverworts, until the Devonian Period, when we earliest date fossil wood. Considerable evolutionary achievement was required to organize cells, the earliest unit of life, into organisms as rigid and massive as trees. Large, erect plants need the strength of cellulose and also vascular columns up which they can pump water and nutrients.

Dry seasons and winters have to be reckoned with. The cross-fertilization in earlier forms of life had been accomplished in the water. In the tree ferns and in the cycads, which remain yet in Australian and African forests, fertilization still took place in water droplets; only in later conifers do trees work out ways, with insects and wind, to pollinate in the open air. These problems are solved and forests have been persistently present since Middle Devonian times. They have been continuously in place in tropical climates, provided that the landscapes have remained

well watered. In temperate and boreal climates, forests have tracked ice sheets as they advanced and retreated, the forests returning millennia after millennia.

This deeper sense of time presents an aesthetic challenge. In ways radically unlike the aesthetic appreciation of crafted art objects—whether recently made or surviving from classical centuries—*aesthetic interpretation has to reckon with antiquity that is hundreds of orders of magnitude greater.* Even where the beholder's knowledge of the details of forest history is rather limited (as is true, more or less, for us all), one knows that this past is there in the shadows—first on the order of centuries, recorded in tree rings and fire scars; and behind that on the order of millennia, recorded in landforms, glacial moraines, successional patterns; and on paleontological scales, as one discovers from fossils and pollen analyses. A forest always comes with an aura of ancient and lost origins.

There is dynamic change in the midst of this antiquity. Seasons pass; the snow melts, birch catkins lengthen, warblers return, the days grow longer, and loons begin to call. Where the season is wet or dry, as in the Amazon, the rains return and the varzea floor floods. These cycles are superimposed on longer range dynamisms not so evident because of their greater scale. Here is vast but passing time; and now one also confronts in nature an element of historical evolution that is, again, radically different from any aesthetic challenge faced with art objects and their cultural history.

Art is sometimes celebrated for its timeless dimensions, despite the fact that art objects themselves age and are reinterpreted from age to age. Sculptors carve forms into stone, and even paint on canvas can persist over centuries. But neither statues nor paintings evolve as do forests. Perhaps there are analogues of classical forms that are enduring in the sweep of the hills or in the symmetries of the conifers. Yet whatever is timelessly recurring is also instantiated in recurrent change.

The forest—we must first think—is prehistoric and perennial, especially in contrast with ephemeral civilizations, their histories, politics, and arts. The perceptive forest visitor realizes also the centuries-long forest successions, proceeding toward climax, yet ever interrupted and reset by fire and storm. One confronts the evolutionary histories of forests tracking climatic changes. One sees erosional, orogenic, and geomorphic processes in rock strata, canyon walls, glacial valleys. The Carboniferous Forests were giant club mosses and horsetails; the Jurassic Forests were gymnosperms—conifers, cycads, ginkgoes, seed ferns. A forest today is yesterday being transformed into tomorrow. A pristine forest is an historical museum that, unlike cultural museums, continues to be what it was, a living landscape. This dynamism couples with antiquity to demand an order of aesthetic interpretation that one is unlikely to find in the criticism of art and its artifacts. Art too is sometimes dynamic, of course, as in music or the dance; but every art form is ephemeral on these scales of time.

In the Petrified Forest in Arizona, tens of thousands of rock logs are strewn across the desert, relics of trees living when the region was tropical forest 225 mil-

lion years ago. The dominant genus in these great forests was *Araucarioxylon*; the remnant logs are enormous. A living relative is the Norfolk Island pine, *Araucaria heterophylla*; another relative is the monkey puzzle tree, *Araucaria araucana* from South America. Both are tall conifers with a monopodial crown and radial branches, which, because of their beauty of form, are widely planted in subtropical climates today. The genus, with its characteristic form, has persisted through changes. The Petrified Forest is not far from the Grand Canyon, and comparisons give perspective. The Canyon rocks are old, the older the further down one descends; but the Canyon itself was cut in the last five or six million years. So the ancient pines were living long enough ago for the Grand Canyon to be cut and re-cut again some forty-five times over! Their descendants continue today.

John Muir spent most of his life in the California forests, where sequoia trees reach an age of several thousand years: "The forests of America," he exclaimed, "must have been a great delight to God; for they were the best he ever planted."¹ In later life, the aging Muir became interested in the Petrified Forest; through his efforts the forest was declared a National Monument in 1906. Dealing now in millions rather than thousands of years, the sense of antiquity overwhelmed him. "I sit silent and alone from morn till eve in the deeper silence of the enchanted, old, old forests.... The hours go on neither long nor short, glorious for imagination ... but tough for the old paleontological body nearing seventy."² Nature has been planting forests a long time.

The sense of time passes over into an archetypal experience of pervasive and perennial natural kind. In the prehuman past, about sixty percent of Earth's land surface was forested, and much of it still is. There is a vast taiga, or boreal forest, in Canada, Siberia, and northern Europe; temperate forest was the historic cover over much of the United States, Europe, and China. There are tropical rainforests, tropical deciduous forests, thorn forests, gallery forests. Australian forests may contain hardly a single species found elsewhere in the world, but still there are the forests, of *Eucalyptus* or *Allocasuarina* rather than oak or spruce. The phenomenon of forests is so widespread, persistent, and diverse, spontaneously appearing almost wherever moisture and climatic conditions permit it, that forests cannot be accidents or anomalies but rather must be a characteristic expression of the creative process.

There is also the steppe and the veldt, the tundra and the sea, and these too have their power to arouse a sense of antiquity and of ongoing life. The desert after a rain is a joy to behold in the momentary flourishing of the flora. But forests have more evident and perennial exuberance. The forest is where the "roots" go deep, where life rises high from the ground. Forests convey a sense of life flourishing in more massive and enduring proportions; the vertical contrasts with the horizontal. The biomass is greater than on the grasslands; living things command more space, from canopy through understories down to the underground. The fiber is more solid; the vegetation on the forest floor includes annuals and biennials, but the dominants are perennials on scales of decades and centuries. The tropical rainfor-

est is the most complex and diverse ecological community on Earth, with up to 300 different species of trees in a single hectare.

A characteristic element in the aesthetic experience of nature moves us with how the central goods of the biosphere—hydrologic cycles, photosynthesis, soil fertility, food chains, genetic codes, speciation, reproduction, succession—were in place long before humans arrived. Aesthetics is something, as we shall be saying, that goes on in experiences of the human mind, but the dynamics and structures organizing forest biomes do not come out of the mind. Immersed in a nonhuman frame of reference, one knows the elements primordial. Subjective though aesthetic experience may be, here we make contact with natural certainties. Forests and sky, rivers and earth, the everlasting hills, the cycling seasons, wildflowers and wildlife—these are superficially pleasant scenes in which to recreate. At more depth, they are the timeless natural givens that support everything else.

On these scales humans are a late-coming novelty, and that awareness too is aesthetically demanding. Humans evolved out of the forests, although with early *Homo sapiens* that often meant the savanna, the tree-studded but still relatively open-to-view landscape. Our ancestors had descended from the trees and gained upright posture; they needed hands for civilization, spaces through which to hunt, and room for their camps and villages. The gallery forests of Africa are as much forests as Douglas fir in the American Northwest; they too exemplify the forest archetype.

Nor did humans escape their association with forests. There is evidence that we are still genetically disposed to prefer partially forested landscapes.³ Most of the lands that humans have inhabited, especially as they moved from tropical to temperate climates, were, at the time of human entry, forested; and many of them have remained heavily forested until comparatively recent times. Civilization, especially in Europe and America, created space for itself in the midst of forests, opening these up, making our residential areas more like savannas. Though we felt more comfortable clearing the forest for a pasture, for the farm and the village, we kept the trees throughout the countryside, and along streets and in parks even in our urban environments.

In the back of our minds, we know that all such trees, wherever incorporated into the economics or aesthetics of civilization, are out of the legacy of the forest. We are reminded by them that forests are always there on the horizon of Western culture, part of our life support system, part of our origins. This location—trees amongst us and forests on the horizon of culture—keeps forests there in their wildness as a perennial symbol of an archetypal realm out of which we once came. The forest is where one touches the primordial elements raw and pure. “I went to the woods,” remarked Thoreau, “because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.”⁴

No one can live in bare woods alone; civilization too is, for humans, one of the essential facts of life. The town, however, is not so aboriginally archetypal, and

that element in life is what is experienced in forests. Were civilization to collapse, the forests would return. The earth would revert to wilderness, because this is the foundational ground. Such aesthetic power of nature stands in strong contrast to classical aesthetic experience of art forms. The creations of sculptors, painters, musicians, and craftsmen always betoken civilization, the critical beholder enjoying the fruits of the labor and leisure of culture. But in the forest the elements are savage; one is not dealing with art or artifact, nor even of artist, but one has penetrated to the archetypes.

There are inanimate natural kinds that nature generates and regenerates over the epochs: mountains, canyons, rivers, estuaries. But the miracle of Earth is that nature decorates this geomorphology with life. Trees evoke this genesis and biological power: Eden with its tree of life, or the shoot growing out of the stump of Jesse, or the cedars of Lebanon—again and again there is life's transient beauty sustained over chaos, life persisting in the midst of its perpetual perishing. A visit to a forest contributes to the human sense of place in space and time, of duration, antiquity, continuity. There one encounters "the types and symbols of Eternity" (Wordsworth).⁵

II. Scientific Appreciation of Forests

En route to such appreciation, one needs the knowledge that scientific forestry can provide. True, one can enjoy forests for their form and color, oblivious to the taxonomic names of the species (*Picea pungens* or *Quercus alba*), much less knowledge of the forest type (montane transition zone to the subalpine, or an oak-hickory forest). The autumn leaves require only an eye for color, with perhaps also a sense of passing seasons, which adds to an ephemeral touch of sadness. This is a lovely Indian summer day, and winter on the way. The hues of spring green, bursting forth upon leafing out, replacing the wintry grays of the trunks and limbs, still set against the darker conifers—one does not need science to appreciate these features. Much less still does one always need paleontological knowledge (that gymnosperms anciently were largely replaced by angiosperms), or ecological explanations (gymnosperms nevertheless dominate in high elevation or latitude climatic regimes).

Still, one cannot adequately enjoy a forest more or less as though it were found art, with admirable form and color. A forest is not art at all; there is no artist. To see the forest landscape as art object is to misunderstand it. Nor is it just some potential materials for our aesthetic composition. If we make the forest over into an object of our aesthetic fancy, as we might find a piece of driftwood and display it for its form and curve, then we project onto it our craft and criteria, yet fail to see what is there. Aesthetic experience of nature always demands our realizing that nature itself is a nonartistic object, not designed by any artist for our admiration, not framed or put on a pedestal—all this is much of the secret of nature's aesthetic power, construct though we may the aesthetic categories through which such nature is experienced.

One has to appreciate what is not evident, and here science helps. Marvelous things are going on in dead wood, or underground, or in the dark, or microscopically, or slowly, over time; these processes are not scenic, but an appreciation of them can be aesthetic. The stellate pubescence on the underside of a *Shepherdia* leaf, seen with a hand lens, is quite striking. The weird green luminescence of *Panus stypticus*, a mushroom, discovered on a moonless night, is never forgotten. One experiences how things fit together in the intricate patterns of life. The good of a tree is only half over at its death; an old snag provides nesting cavities, perches, insect larvae, food for birds.

One can enjoy trees, as did Kilmer: "I think that I shall never see, a poem lovely as a tree."⁶ If one knows, however, that that is a conifer, and those are the pistillate cones and these the staminate cones, and that maples and ashes have opposite leaves, or that willows have only one bud scale, one sees more than poetic beauty in trees. Science requires a closer look at flowers and fruits, their structure and symmetry. There is careful observation to underwrite and support what can otherwise be too impressionistic.

True, those who can count the needle fascicles and get the species right, if they never experience goose pimples when the wind whips through the pines, fail as much as do the poets in their naive romanticism. Nevertheless, only when moving through science to the deeper aesthetic experiences that are enriched by science can the forest be most adequately known. Aestheticians are often not comfortable with this; they want to insist on human capacities to confront nature in relative independence of science.⁷ One must be moved, but one needs to be moved in the right direction, where "right" means with appropriate appreciation of what is actually going on.

Trees push toward the sky, and this sense of pressing upward is vital in forest appreciation. There is, of course, a ready scientific explanation for such loft. Given photosynthesis, there is competition for sunlight, and plants that can place their leaves higher are the winners in the struggle for survival. The tree has both to invest in structural materials, cellulose, to maintain the heights needed, and also to lift needed nutrients and ground water to such elevations; hence the structure of trunks and limbs. Another of the ecological archetypes is grassland, found extensively where water is too limiting a resource for forests; also there are alpine and tundra ecosystems where the wind and the cold are too limiting.

These survival techniques are the causes of forests, but what is one to make of appreciating the results achieved? This introduces another element in aesthetic challenge that is without precedent in classical art criticism. One seldom requires an appropriate scientific appreciation of an art object for its proper enjoyment. Forests have to be, in a certain measure, disenchanted to be properly enjoyed, although, as we shall insist, forest science need not eliminate the element of the sublime, or even of the sacred. Indigenous and premodern peoples typically enchanted their forests. After science, we no longer see forests as haunted by fairies, nymphs, or gnomes. Forests are biotic communities; we have naturalized them.

Perhaps one can enjoy the riot of autumn colors or the subtle spring hues by lingering over the scene before one's eyes. But a forest cannot be understood simply by looking long and hard at it—whether the understanding sought is scientific or aesthetic. A campfire, for example, built for warmth on an autumn evening, can be enjoyed aesthetically, and perhaps one does not need to know about the oxidation and reduction of carbon to enjoy its flickering light in the twilight, or to welcome its warmth against the cool of the night. But fire cannot really be understood by however careful an observation, trying to see what is taking place. The naturalist Jean Baptiste Lamarck tried that and failed; he thought the aggressive fire was stripping away chromatic layers to find the basic black beneath. Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier gave us the understanding we need with experiments weighing the products of combustion, experiments with animals showing that they could not breathe in combusted air. He realized that oxygen is there, that combustion is the oxidation of carbon, with similarities to breathing, the energy driving life.

To understand a forest, one needs concepts—such as carbon bonding, oxidation, oxygen balance, photosynthesis—and knowledge of glucose, cellulose, or nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous. Science takes away the colors, if you insist; apart from beholders, there is no autumn splendor or spring green. But science gives us the trees solidly there, photosynthesizing without us, energetically vital to the system of life of which we are also a part. Forestry is usually thought to be an applied science, but it can also, when it gains the perspective of a pure science, help us to appreciate what the forest is in itself. There are trees rising toward the sky, birds on the wing and beasts on the run, age after age, impelled by a genetic language almost two billion years old. There is struggle and adaptive fitness, energy and evolution inventing fertility and prowess. There is succession and speciation, muscle and fat, smell and appetite, law and form, structure and process. There is light and dark, life and death, the mystery of existence. These figure in aesthetic experience, but there must be science beneath.

III. Aesthetic Engagement in Forests

Science, however necessary, is never sufficient. Forests must be encountered. Forests are constructed by nature, and science teaches us how that is so. Yet forests by nature contain no aesthetic experience; that has to be constructed as we humans arrive. Knowledge of the forest as an objective community does not guarantee the full round of aesthetic experience, not until one moves into that community oneself.

In nature unvisited by humans we incline to think there is no aesthetic experience at all, certainly not in the trees, and hardly in the birds or the foxes. After all, the trees are not even green, much less beautiful, except as we humans are perceiving them. If a tree falls in the forest, and there is no perceiver, there is no sound. The secondary qualities are observer-introduced. *A fortiori*, forests cannot be beautiful on their own. The primary qualities, or the biological functions, or the

ecological relationships are there without us. But only when we humans arrive to color things up, to take an interest, is there any experience of beauty; aesthetic experience of forests is an interactive phenomenon during which the forest beauty is constituted.

In the forest itself, there is no scenery; for example, we compose the landscape vista. Subjective experience and objective forests, beauty and trees—this conjoins and juxtaposes opposites: forests undergo no aesthetic experience; trees enjoy no beauty. The beauty is in the eye of the beholder, constituted with our phenomenal experience, whatever forest properties may arouse such sense of beauty. Meanwhile, it is difficult to escape the experience of gratuitous beauty—with autumn leaves, or montane peaks, or with trilliums unexpected along a woodland path.

The aesthetic challenge is to complement the forest dynamics, which have been ongoing over the centuries and millennia, with this novel emergent that does come into being when I arrive. Appropriate aesthetic experience ought to be “up to” the forest, that is, adequate to its form, integrity, antiquity, value; but whether this happens is “up to” me, that is, unless I see that it happens, it does not happen. Aesthetic appreciation can fail, if humans, scientists, were to visit and gain nothing but facts about trees.

This demand for adequate response to nature is different from the demand with art. Much more is up to me. Confronting an art object, we realize that there was once an artist, and we may think it significant to recover something of the aesthetic experience of the artist. When we are enjoying a symphony, the musicians are enjoying it too. Aesthetic intent constitutes the art, and the beholder comes to share, perhaps also to enrich, this intent. But in the forest, surrounded by trees, we alone are the loci of aesthetic life. The challenge is to encounter nonaesthetic trees, mountains, rivers, and awaken to the experience of beauty. It is unlikely that the categories formulated for the human arts will serve for the demands of forest experience.

Aesthetic appreciation of nature, at the level of forests and landscapes, requires embodied participation, immersion, and struggle. We initially may think of forests as scenery to be looked upon. That is a mistake. A forest is entered, not viewed. It is doubtful that one can experience a forest from a roadside pullover, any more than on television. A deer in a zoo is not the experience of wild deer. The cage prevents the reality. Experiencing a forest through a car window differs mostly in that the beholder now is in the cage, which again prevents the reality. You do not really engage a forest until you are well within it.⁸

The forest attacks all our senses—sight, hearing, smell, feeling, even taste. Visual experience is critical. But no forest is adequately experienced without the odor of the pines or of the wild roses; and one catches how much animal senses of smell can exceed our own. The elk I heard, but did not see; they caught my scent. The wind is against me. What is a forest without the wind heard and felt, against which one draws his jacket tighter? Wait, wasn't that a kinglet that called—the first I have heard this season. Art is seldom so multisensory.

Most of all, there is the kinesthetic sense of bodily presence, being incarnate in place. One seeks shelter for lunch, to discover, cooling down after the brisk walk, that there is too much shade, and one moves to the sun and enjoys the warmth. Hiking in, there are hours of footprints behind me. I have rounded a bend and there before me is the rolling expanse of more forest than that through which I have already come. Where is the next water likely to be? How much more of the trail can I safely do today?

This surrounding and engagement, spontaneity and participatory eventfulness, differs from art, which is typically located and looked upon, as with a framed picture or a statue atop a pedestal. In a forest I have to choose what to consider—how much to integrate, the level of focus—in a place present all around me. A person is immersed in some art, as in a splendid building or a garden. These too have their boundaries: one can see the building from a distance, or circumscribe the garden boundaries. A forest must eventually have boundaries too, but the boundaries are often zones of transition, where one aesthetic challenge passes into another. The boundaries are ample enough that one can get so far in that any discrete borders are gone, especially in large forests. That is, more or less, the test of a forest against a woodlot, or a serious forest against a timber tract: whether one can get at such distance from the boundaries that they disappear from constant consciousness. Such boundaries in art seldom disappear. We need the framing to separate out the artifact and to confine the experience.

There is something amiss about the idea that aesthetics requires disinterest and distance, in contrast to more utilitarian pursuits. This is only half true even for art objects. All art invites participation; the aesthetic experience must have some bite to it. Nevertheless, one walks away from the painting or statue, and gets lunch elsewhere. If the forest is only scenery through a car window, one can plan lunch in town. Deep in the forest one is embodied, surrounded by the elements, and the total sensory, vital participation is more urgent.

True, one can experience the beauty of a forest only if one's more basic needs for food and shelter have been satisfied. One separates out the beauty of the snowflakes, seen at a glance on one's dark jacket sleeve, from the fact that the gathering storm is dangerous, and a few more inches of snow on the winter's snowpack, filling in one's tracks, will obscure the route out. Still, the bodily participation in the forest, the competence demanded and enjoyed there amidst its opportunities and threats, the struggle for location in and against the primordial world—this engagement enriches the aesthetic experience. I am undeniably here, and the forest, for all its aesthetic stimulation, is indifferent to my needs. I am five miles from the trailhead; I am quite on my own. The storm is coming up, the spruce are bending with the wind, supper is not cooked, and it is getting dark.

Gaston Bachelard writes: "We do not have to be long in the woods to experience the always rather anxious impression of 'going deeper and deeper' into a limitless world. Soon, if we do not know where we are going, we no longer know where we are.... This limitless world ... is a primary attribute of the forest."⁹ It is

easier to get lost there than in a more open savanna or grassland. Trails give a sense of security. Forests can be dense; they veil space with their trunks and leaves, and one has to take care against disorientation. But that is again to realize our limits, to sense vulnerable embodiment, and to risk engagement with the sublime.

IV. The Forest and the Sublime

In the primeval forest humans know the most authentic of wilderness emotions, the sense of the sublime. By contrast, few persons get goose pimples indoors, in art museums, in fashionable shopping centers, or at the city park. The sublime invokes a category that was, in centuries past, important in aesthetics but is thought to have lapsed in our more modern outlook. Never mind whether the category is currently fashionable. The sublime is perennial in encounter with nature because wherever people step to the edge of the familiar, everyday world, they risk encounter with grander, more provocative forces that touch heights and depths beyond normal experience, forces that transcend us and both attract and threaten. Forests are never very modern or postmodern, or even classical or premodern. They explode such categories and move outside culture into fundamental nature.

Almost by definition, the sublime runs off scale. There is vertigo before vastness, magnitude, antiquity, power, elemental forces austere and fierce, enormously more beyond our limits. At an overlook in the mountains, with trees all around, the ground runs right up to your feet and disappears over the horizon, often, in the as-yet-unexplored forest, with a suggestion of space prolonged indefinitely. The forest's roots, that is, its radical origins, plunge down to depths one knows not where. The trees point upward along the mountain slope, which rises to join the sky, and the scene soars off to heights unknown. The aesthetic situation has gotten out of control because the limits have vanished. The frames and pedestals familiar to cultured aesthetic experience are gone. There are no theatrical stages with actors about to appear, no musical instruments in players' hands, no garden walls or gardeners planting the oncoming season's flowers. One encounters what was aboriginally there in its present incarnation.

But few forests are primeval—the more prosaic aestheticians will protest. Rare is the forest that has not been reshaped by human agency—by cutting up trees with chain saws, by cutting up forests with roads, by fencing forests around and running cattle through them, by intentionally planting more desirable species. There are also the unintended changes, like the chestnut blight, or the understory invaded with honeysuckle.

Still, the forest, shaped by management and mismanagement though it may be, proves more able than the field or pasture to retain the natural element. Nature takes back over and does its thing: if not its pristine activity, then still something relatively wild. Unless the forest, so-called, is only a plantation, impressive wilderness remains even in silviculture. Hopefully, the wildlife is there; something of the native biodiversity remains. A National Forest may be a working forest, not a

wilderness. Still, a day's hike through it, even if along an old timber road, is more likely to produce the sense of the sublime than is a stroll through the pasture.

In other realms of nature—as we stand awestruck before the midnight sky perhaps, or watching a sunset over arctic ice, or deep in the Vishnu schist of the Grand Canyon—beauty and power are yet lifeless. In a forest the sublime and the beautiful are bound up with the struggle for life. Think, for instance, of windswept bristlecone pines along a ridge in the Sierras. Or of the stunted birch toward the treeline in the Norwegian mountains. The biological element in the sublime is the beauty of life coupled with struggle. The aesthetic challenge is conflict and resolution presented on these awesome scales.

Like clouds, seashores, and mountains, forests are never ugly, they are only more or less beautiful; the scale runs from zero upward with no negative domain. Destroyed forests can be ugly—a burned, windthrown, diseased, or clear-cut forest. But even the ruined forest, regenerating itself, still has positive aesthetic properties. Trees rise to fill the empty place against the sky. A forest is filled with organisms that are marred and ragged—oaks with broken limbs, a crushed violet, the carcass of an elk. The gnarled bristlecone at the edge of the tundra is not really ugly, not unless endurance and strength are ugly. It is the presence and symbol of life forever renewed before the winds that blast it.

Forests are full of shadows, and this is metaphorically as well as literally true. The darkness shadowing life is as much the source of beauty as is light or life. The word “forest” (a grander word than “trees” in the plural) forces retrospect and prospect; it invites holistic categories of interpretation as yesterday's flora and fauna pass into tomorrow. Yes, there are fire scars at the bases of these ponderosas, but see how they have healed over. And we were just walking through the lodgepole forest regenerated after that fire two decades back; the stand is already thinning itself and the taller trees overtopping our heads.

Think about it. There is enough power in a handful of these cones to regenerate the forest henceforth for millennia. Yes, giants have fallen, and rotting logs fill the forest floor. And see, here is the humus from which the present forest rises—“the immeasurable height of woods decaying, never to be decayed” (Wordsworth).¹⁰ This softens the ugliness and sets it in somber beauty. When one reaches a high point where the forest dominates the landscape in every direction, and remembers this regeneration of new life out of old on a scale of centuries and millennia, one knows the sense of the sublime.

V. The Forest and the Sacred

When beauty transforms into the sublime, manifest in the perennial vitality of an ancient forest, the aesthetic is elevated into the numinous. “Break forth into singing, O mountains, O forest, and every tree in it!” (Isaiah 44.23). “The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly; the cedars of Lebanon which he planted” (Psalms 104.16). “The groves were God's first temples” (William Cullen

Bryant).¹¹ The forest is a kind of church. Trees pierce the sky, like cathedral spires. Light filters down, as through stained glass. The forest canopy is lofty, far above our heads. There is something about being deep in the woods, with the ground under one's feet and no roof over one's head, that generates religious experience.

Again, just as aestheticians earlier resisted being too indebted to science, now aestheticians may protest that their experiences need not be religious.¹² Nevertheless, the line between aesthetic respect and reverence for nature is often crossed unawares, somewhere in the region of the sublime. In common with churches, forests, like sea and sky, invite transcending the human world and experiencing a comprehensive, embracing realm. Forests can serve as a more provocative, perennial sign of this than many of the traditional, often outworn, symbols devised by the churches. Mountaintop experiences, the wind in the pines, a howling storm, a quiet snowfall in wintry woods, solitude in a grove of towering spruce, an overflight of honking geese—these generate “a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused ... a motion and spirit that impells ... and rolls through all things. Therefore I am still a lover of the meadows and the woods, and mountains” (Wordsworth).¹³ Muir exclaimed, “The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness.”¹⁴

Were we saying that science has secularized the forest? Yes, if that means that the forest is no longer enchanted. But the forest is strangely resistant to being secularized in the etymological sense of that term, being reduced to “this present age” (Latin *saeculum*), or in any reductionist, or profane senses either. Forests do not mechanize well; they are not machines. There is too much that is organic, or, better, too much that is vital, or, better still, too much that is valuable. The spirit of place returns.

Science leaves us puzzled whether the values in the woods are intrinsic or instrumental, and if intrinsic whether they are anthropogenic and projected onto the trees or autonomously intrinsic and found by the forest beholder, whose aesthetic experience tunes him or her in to what is going on. The forest is there, but so also is the person here, trying to figure it all out. The answers seem to lie in terms of what is discovered in the forests, not merely in terms of what preferences we adopt toward it. But when value is discovered there, the forest as archetype, as spontaneously self-organizing, as generator of life, not merely as resource, but as Source of being, the forest starts to become a sacrament of something beyond, something ultimate in, with, and under these cathedral groves.

The forest has a way of spontaneously re-enchanting itself. Forests are not haunted, but that does not mean that there is nothing haunting about forests. Perhaps the supernatural is gone, but here the natural can be supercharged with mystery. Science removes the little mysteries (how acorns make oaks that make acorns) to replace them with bigger ones (how the acorn-oak-acorn loop got established in the first place). Thanks to the biochemists, molecular biologists, geneticists, botanists, ecologists, forest scientists, we know how this green world works. But is this an account that demystifies what is going on?

Photons of light flow from the sun. Some impact leaves and are captured by antenna molecules in the chloroplasts (a half million of them per square millimeter of leaf), relayed to a reaction center molecule where, in Photosystem II, the energy of the photons is used to move electrons up to a high energy perch (at the PS 680 chlorophyll molecule). The electrons then move down a transport chain, cocking an ADP molecule up to its ATP high-energy form, and are passed to the reaction center of Photosystem I. There, with more photons absorbed, the electrons are moved back up to a second high-energy perch (at the PS 700 molecule). They descend another electron transport chain, this time producing a high-energy NADPH molecule.

The two high energy molecules (ATP and NADPH) are then used, in the Calvin cycle, to synthesize sugar. This is a complex series of over a dozen reactions that takes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and shuttles it around in numerous steps to make, first, three-carbon intermediates and then the six-carbon sugar glucose, as well as other products. That sugar can be stored in the plant as starch, as well as sugar. This is the energy that powers essentially all of life, the fuel for natural history. Or the glucose can be made into another polymer, cellulose, to form the tough and persistent structures of plant and forest life.

Moses thought that the burning bush, not consumed, was quite a miracle. We hardly believe any more in that sort of supernatural miracle; science has made such stories incredible. What has it left instead? A self-organizing photosynthesis driving a life synthesis that has burned for millennia, life as a strange fire that outlasts the sticks that feed it. This is, one could say, rather spirited behavior on the part of secular matter, “spirited” in the animated sense, in the root sense of a “breath” or “wind” that energizes this mysterious, vital metabolism. These bushes in the Sinai desert, these cedars of Lebanon, these forests across America, the best God ever planted—all such woody flora are hardly phenomena less marvelous even if we no longer want to say that this is miraculous.

Indeed, in the original sense of “miracle”—a wondrous event, without regard to the question whether natural or supernatural—the phenomenon of photosynthesis with the continuing floral life it supports is the secular equivalent of the burning bush. The bush that Moses watched was an individual in a species line that had perpetuated itself for millennia, coping by the coding in its DNA, fueled by the sun, using cytochrome *c* molecules several billion years old, and surviving without being consumed. Remember the magnificent *Araucarioxylon* 225 million years ago in the now petrified Arizona forest, surviving yet in the *Araucaria* of Africa and Australia. To go back to the miracle that Moses saw, a bush that burned briefly without being consumed, would be to return to something several orders of magnitude less spectacular.

The account we have is, if you like, a naturalistic account, but this nature is quite spectacular stuff. Science traces out some causes, which disappear rearward in deep time, and carry on a continuing genesis, and leave us stuttering for meanings. The forest remains a kind of wonderland, a land that provokes wonder. It is not so

much that some ultimate or Absolute noumenon eludes us as that the empirical phenomena about which there is absolutely no doubt need more explanation than the secular categories seem able to give. We may doubt that God exists, but here without doubt is this existing forest, and nature lies in, with, and under it. If God is gone, then Nature needs to be spelled with a capital N.

Loren Eiseley, surveying evolutionary history, exclaims, "Nature itself is one vast miracle transcending the reality of night and nothingness."¹⁵ Ernst Mayr, one of the most celebrated living biologists, impressed by the creativity in natural history, says, "Virtually all biologists are religious, in the deeper sense of this word, even though it may be a religion without revelation.... The unknown and maybe unknowable instills in us a sense of humility and awe."¹⁶ The sublime is never really far from the religious, since the sublime takes us to the limits of our understanding, and we wonder at what is mysteriously beyond.

Being among the archetypes, the forest is about as near to ultimacy as we can come in phenomenal experience. It presents us with natural history: a vast scene of sprouting, budding, leafing out, flowering, fruiting, passing away, passing life on. I become astonished that the forest should be there, spontaneously generated. There are no forests on Mars or Saturn; none elsewhere in our solar system, perhaps none in our galaxy. But Earth's forests are indisputably here. There is more operational organization, more genetic history in a handful of forest humus than in the rest of the universe, so far as we know. How so? Why? A forest wilderness elicits cosmic questions, differently from art and artifacts. If anything at all on Earth is sacred, it must be this enthralling creativity that characterizes our home planet. Forests are sacraments of life rising up on Earth. Here an appropriate aesthetics becomes spiritually demanding.

Notes

- 1 John Muir, *Our National Parks* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1901), p. 331.
- 2 Quoted in Robert A. Long and Rose Houk, *Dawn of the Dinosaurs: The Triassic in the Petrified Forest* (Petrified Forest, AZ: Petrified Forest Museum Association, 1988), p. 10.
- 3 Gordon H. Orians and Judith H. Heerwagen, "Evolved Responses to Landscapes," in *The Adapted Mind*, eds. Jerome H. Barkow, Leda Cosmides, and John Tooby (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 555-579.
- 4 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* [1854], in *Walden and Civil Disobedience*, ed. Owen Thomas (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966), p. 61.
- 5 William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* [1805], Book VI, line 639.
- 6 Joyce Kilmer, "Trees" [1913], in *Joyce Kilmer: Poems, Essays and Letters* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1918), Volume 1, p. 180.
- 7 In recent discussion, Noël Carroll wants experience of nature "of a less intellectual, more visceral sort," p. 245 [this volume, p. 90] in "On Being Moved by Nature:

- Between Religion and Natural History," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, eds. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 244-266 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 4]; with reply by Allen Carlson, "Nature, Aesthetic Appreciation, and Knowledge," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53 (1995): 393-400. [Editors' Note: See also Allen Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1979): 267-276 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 2].] See also Holmes Rolston III, "Does Aesthetic Appreciation of Landscapes Need to be Science-Based?" *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 35 (1995): 374-386.
- 8 Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992). [Editors' Note: Chapter 11 of *Aesthetics of the Environment*, "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature," is reprinted in this volume, Chapter 3.]
 - 9 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* [1958], trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. 185.
 - 10 Wordsworth, *Prelude*, Book VI, lines 624-625.
 - 11 William Cullen Bryant, *A Forest Hymn* [1825]. See also James George Frazer, "The Worship of Trees," in *The Golden Bough* [1890], a new abridgement (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 82-97.
 - 12 Noël Carroll, "On Being Moved by Nature"; T.J. Diffey, "Natural Beauty without Metaphysics," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, pp. 43-64.
 - 13 William Wordsworth, *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* [1798].
 - 14 John Muir, *John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir*, ed. Linnie Marsh Wolfe (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1938), p. 313.
 - 15 Loren Eiseley, *The Firmament of Time* (New York: Atheneum, 1960), p. 171.
 - 16 Ernst Mayr, *The Growth of Biological Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 81.

The Narrative and the Ambient in Environmental Aesthetics

Cheryl Foster



I.

A cleft has emerged at the heart of contemporary philosophical thinking about aesthetics and the natural environment. This paper attempts to identify, analyze, and compare what lies on either side of the fissure—dichotomous approaches to aesthetic value in relation to nature—and argues for the necessity of both approaches even as it defends the neglected integrity of one (what I call the ambient dimension of aesthetic value) against the current dominance of the other (labeled the narrative dimension of aesthetic value). Neither approach in isolation can fully articulate the experience of nature as it gives rise to what we might know of aesthetic value. In exploring the cleft between the narrative and the ambient in environmental aesthetics, I hope to demonstrate their particular modes of applicability as well as their mutual interdependence, thus enlarging the frame of reference for our inquiry as a whole.

If we want to argue for the importance of aesthetic values in relation to the natural environment, and wish to persuade others of those values, we must first have confidence that the premises for our argument grow out of, and remain firmly rooted in, what we can reasonably be said to know. Speaking of “aesthetic knowledge,” or what we can know through aesthetic experience, however, is not so straightforward as it might appear. Traditionally in this century Anglo-American philosophers have withheld epistemological integrity from most things beyond verifiable propositions. To know meant, quite simply, to determine that a proposition was true in virtue of the justifiable evidence available to support it. The evidence might in the end be empirical, but some philosophers of language especially have steered the focus of their analyses toward the semantic content of propositions, such that conceptual cohesion determines the reliability of any claim to know.

Yet Frank Sibley has argued persuasively and at length for the idea that aesthetic judgments, or aesthetic knowledge about objects and events, issue only from empirical acquaintance. We must perceive the thing about which we claim to know in order to have our judgments taken seriously. In addition, Sibley has argued that, even if one *knew* the perceptual properties of, and conceptual facts about, an object

prior to encountering it, one could nevertheless not judge the aesthetic qualities or impact of the object until perceiving it for oneself.¹ Sibley claims that one cannot derive necessarily true or even appropriate aesthetic predicates from propositional knowledge about an object's physical or genetic properties. Thus, a young, unfurling forest fern could not be judged as "vulnerable" or "tenuous" until one had actually observed it for oneself, even if one could otherwise know ahead of time the color, size, shape, age, context, and composition of the fern.

In one sense this flies in the face of our culture's current thinking about what constitutes knowledge proper. "Knowledge," as something that offers both accurate predictions for the future and withstands analysis through reasonable investigation of evidence, transcends any particular individual to constitute a body of information transmittable in the form of reliable propositions and scientific laws. The challenge for defending claims made about aesthetic value thus becomes: Are we willing to enlarge what we think of as knowledge to include the individual's perceptual acquaintance with and respect for the natural environment, and support the validity of such knowledge in our account of aesthetic value?

Here I argue that it is possible to question, clarify, and extend the frame of reference for aesthetic value to emphasize the perceptual element of knowledge, given that the aesthetic seems indubitably bound up with knowledge by acquaintance in some key way. In a wider sense our task is to tease out what aesthetic experience entails before the aesthetic as a source of value can be balanced with other, diverse forms of value. If I am right about the dichotomous character of current aesthetic theory in relation to the natural world—if many of the most cohesive and reputable theories fall into either the narrative or the ambient dimension of value—then this will qualify any straightforward solution to the problem of how to determine, express, and invoke aesthetic value in the broader effort to preserve natural environments.

II.

Questioning, clarifying, and extending the ways we articulate the aesthetic value of the natural environment results in a paradox for the practical application of what we derive from that questioning process. The paradox ensues from the fact that one of the more powerful and enduring kinds of experience in the formation of aesthetic appreciation of nature resists direct or clear expression in discursive prose. I call this sort of experience the "ambient" dimension of aesthetic value, and in so doing contrast it to some degree with what I shall term the "narrative" dimension of aesthetic value.² While both dimensions have merit and reflect vital approaches to nature appreciation, the ambient dimension as a valid or serious source for aesthetic value has been less prominent within professional philosophic discourse.

Why has the ambient dimension of aesthetic value been marginalized in such discourse? Perhaps the legitimacy of the ambient dimension can be questioned because of its association with a philosophical tradition that takes subjectivity

seriously as a vantage point from which to query and establish forms of value: If a point of view is subjective, then it lacks objectivity, and if it lacks objectivity, then it cannot possibly fall within the range of considerations upon which we make our judgments. I shall argue that our assumptions about more and less legitimate sources of aesthetic value in nature could be misguided and, if misguided, call for a re-examination of current environmental aesthetic theory, where science overshadows other, less quantifiable or direct frameworks for aesthetic assessment.

Yrjö Sepänmaa explores the link between aesthetic assessment and the search for reliable contexts of appreciation in his book *The Beauty of Environment* and concludes that “the task of environmental aesthetics in a metacritical sense is the theoretical control of the description, interpretation and evaluation of the environment and the creation of a frame of reference. It constructs a model of how the environment is received, and in what ways it operates as an aesthetic object.”³ Drawing on Sepänmaa’s metacritical approach to evaluating models of aesthetic appreciation, I have observed that most models of environmental assessment taking shape today promote what I am calling the narrative dimension, a frame of reference that privileges the relationship between the visible or perceptual natural surface and the invisible or intangible events and processes beneath, behind, or before it.

Let me clarify this more accepted narrative dimension of aesthetic value with regard to the natural environment. The narrative dimension tethers perceptual features of the natural environment to diverse frameworks of conceptual information and locates aesthetic value in the capacity of the perceiver to make appreciative judgments about nature’s features within the context of, or with reference to, the framework through which they are viewed. One example of the narrative dimension of aesthetic value at work can be seen in the tendency of aesthetic theorists and nature writers to allude to the mythological or social history linked to the surface they are surveying. Diane Ackerman does this to great effect in her book *A Natural History of the Senses*. In a chapter on the aesthetic power of vision, Ackerman recalls her visit to Big Sur along the California coast between Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Of the many ways to watch the sky, one of the most familiar is through the filigree limbs of a tree, or around and above the trees; this has much to do with how we actually see and observe the sky. Trees conduct the eye from the ground up to the heavens, link the detailed temporariness of life with the bulging blue abstraction overhead. In Norse legend, the huge ash tree Yggdrasil, with its great arching limbs and three swarming roots, stretched high into the sky, holding the universe together, connecting earth to both heaven and hell.... We find trees offering us knowledge in many of the ancient stories and legends, perhaps because they alone seem to unite the earth and the sky—the known, invadable world with everything that is beyond our grasp and our power.⁴

Ackerman begins with an observation about the formal allure of trees and ends with a kind of metaphysical speculation about their mythological value, drawing attention in her observations to a confluence between the perceptual characteristics of trees and the ways those characteristics inform the manufacture of human mythology.

But the narrative dimension of aesthetic value exceeds the fictional or imaginative significance of natural landscapes. Indeed, the most widely accepted forms of the narrative dimension of aesthetic value favor factual frameworks over mythological ones. Marcia Muelder Eaton has alluded to the appeal of this interface between fact and value in her book *Aesthetics and the Good Life*: Good environments often function as *legible* environments, reflections of the degree to which we can draw on nonperceptual information to form the landscape into a coherent and patterned whole.⁵ Consider this passage from the guidebook *Walks and Rambles in Rhode Island* by Rhode Island naturalist and journalist Ken Weber, where a walk through a 1,500-acre forest management area is introduced.

The route described here ... is likely to keep you interested. You start near a tiny cemetery, pass another graveyard (surrounded by a picket fence) hidden far back in the woods, visit a couple of old cellar holes, take a look at a campsite for canoeists along the Pawcatuck River, pause in a clearing where apple and pear trees continue to survive long after abandonment, and walk along fields planted for the benefit of wildlife.⁶

In Weber's description, the legacy of a human community that has long since left the woods underscores the natural sense of solitude on this forest walk. Here the forest shelters the remnants of a human past, a past that can be identified in the explicit traces it leaves among the trees and brooks and fields. The narrative dimension of aesthetic value reads the human history of agrarian management into a reclaimed forest landscape and broadens our appreciation of its formal qualities to include the resonance of social and natural time passing through the stark contemplation of ruins.

Still another narrative form of aesthetic value privileges natural history and the frameworks of science for understanding and seeing what nature reveals through its surface. The depth of time beneath the formal and perceptual features cannot be seen by the naive eye and thus must be understood, rather than observed, as directly influencing the perceptual surface. Through a grasp of previously present processes we can read the natural environment as the offspring of its progenitors and see its perceptual features as manifestations of those progenitors. As Holmes Rolston has noted, "Without science, there is no sense of deep time, nor of geological or evolutionary history, and little appreciation of ecology. Science cultivates the habit of looking closely, as well as of looking for long periods of time. One is more likely to experience the landscape at multiple scales of both space and time."⁷

This conceptual expansion of perceptual space by consciousness of time relies again and again on our grasp of a history, our awareness during aesthetic encounters of the unseen march of events and processes that manifest their traces in natural environments. Although Rolston argues for the necessity (but not the sufficiency) of science-based accounts of natural time in any rich aesthetic reading of the natural environment, others extend the relevance of history to the humanistic element of appreciation structured by time. Yuriko Saito acknowledges the importance of science while simultaneously exploring other avenues of appreciative entry into nature,⁸ while Eaton argues that “the theoretical foundation for aesthetic assessment of the environment (and for everything else) rests in awareness of the *history* of values. Aesthetic delight is determined largely by tradition. Scientific studies of preference or viewer psychology will be truly objective only if they are placed within a humanistic context.”⁹ This context illuminates the intrinsic properties of the thing in which we take aesthetic delight, but the preferences of culture and tradition serve as the watermark of that context. The current emphasis in environmental aesthetic theory on the pre-eminence of scientific readings of the natural environment may on this view reveal a great deal about the standards and interests of our own contemporary culture, a culture that privileges information and the application of it in search of a wider acquaintance with the physical processes supporting the world.

In considering science as one narrative dimension of aesthetic value, think of the New England region of the United States, where autumn brings about a remarkable transformation in various deciduous trees. We call the season “fall” in deference to the dropping of spectacularly colored leaves from their homes in the trees. But what we *call* the season has less importance, for a science-based narrative of aesthetic appreciation, than an explanation of why the dropping of leaves occurs and how the process manifests itself in the season’s perceptual surface. Diane Ackerman again provides a suitable example. First she explores the changing of deciduous leaves from green into reds, yellows, oranges, and umbers.

In the dog days of summer the tree begins pulling nutrients back into its trunk and roots, pares down, and gradually chokes off its leaves. A corky layer of cells forms at the leaves’ slender petioles, then scars over. Undernourished, the leaves stop producing the pigment chlorophyll, and photosynthesis ceases.

A turning leaf stays partly green at first, then reveals splotches of yellow and red as the chlorophyll gradually breaks down. Dark green seems to stay the longest in the veins, outlining and defining them. During the summer, chlorophyll dissolves in the heat and light, but it is also being steadily replaced. In the fall, on the other hand, no new pigment is produced, and so we notice the other colors that were always right there, right in the leaf, although chlorophyll’s shocking green hid them from view.¹⁰

And why do the brilliantly revealed, multicolored leaves drop from the trees?

As a leaf ages, the growth hormone, auxin, fades, and cells at the base of the petiole divide. Two or three rows of small cells, lying at right angles to the axis of the petiole, react with water, then come apart, leaving the petioles hanging on by only a few threads of xylem. A light breeze, and the leaves are airborne.¹¹

Ackerman's narrative brings dynamic but unseen processes to bear on the dramatic chromatic changes in autumn leaves and allows us to *understand* the perceptual surface of the environment as an index of cellular and environmental changes we cannot witness directly. Knowledge of plant physiology here contributes to seeing nature as an index of what Rolston calls deep time, of processes and events beneath and before the perceptual properties we sense in front of us.

The most prolific and consistent champion of science as *the* appropriate framework for a proper aesthetic reading of the natural environment is Allen Carlson. In a series of articles appearing during the last twenty years, Carlson has progressively and persuasively argued for the relevance of scientific categories of understanding to objective aesthetic judgments about the natural environment. In one of his more recent essays, "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature," Carlson not only reaffirms what he sees as a disjunction between the proper aesthetic appreciation of art and that of nature, but also shifts the language of his argument *away* from a traditional aesthetic emphasis on formal beauty and *toward* a more overt acknowledgment of the dimension I have been discussing, the narrative dimension of aesthetic value.

Carlson differentiates "design appreciation," which recognizes and applies the details of human intention and creation to the appreciation of artifacts, from "order appreciation," in which an individual appreciates a natural object by reference to general nonaesthetic and nonartistic accounts of its genesis. Both modes of appreciation illuminate the various forces that produced the object under consideration, thus making it appreciable in terms of an understanding of those forces.¹² Order appreciation, however, stresses the nonintentional genesis of the object appreciated. In this sense any and all natural objects end up as more or less equally appreciable, because in order appreciation "there is only appreciating an object as ordered in light of a story."¹³ Carlson recognizes that although such stories may appear in themselves to be nonaesthetic, they are ultimately exceedingly aesthetic because "they illuminate nature as ordered and in doing so give it meaning, significance, and beauty—qualities those giving the stories find aesthetically appealing."¹⁴

Interestingly, Carlson draws on the language of art and human creativity to differentiate nature from that very creativity.¹⁵ More to my point, he employs the metaphor of the story, the dramatic progression of events through time as relayed by a human narrator, to make his case for the primacy of science in the aesthetic appreciation of nature.

It is not surprising that the story provided by natural science functions in the aesthetic appreciation of nature.... Science is the paradigm of that which reveals

objects for what they are and with the properties they have. Thus, it not only presents itself as the source of objective truth, it brands alternative accounts as subjective falsehood and therefore, in accord with objective appreciation, as irrelevant to aesthetic appreciation.¹⁶

Carlson promotes the objective status of appreciative judgments made through order appreciation, but, by his own admission, science functions in this context as a story: the narrative stress of Carlson's approach is overtly apparent. The theoretical use of context to posit the natural environment as an index of that context intrigues me because I do not perceive that the narrative dimension of the scientific context (in its dependence on the formulation of a story) has been made entirely explicit. A story stands among the most human and subjective kinds of phenomena. Although Carlson clearly invokes the concept of "story" by analogy, stories in their most literal form function as acts of individual creation and not as processes of discovery. In seeking to ground aesthetic judgments objectively through the metaphor of the story, the narrative dimension of aesthetic value actually hints at the power of subjectivity from within its own form of discourse without in the least confusing itself with or abandoning itself to subjectivity.

III.

The efficacy of any narrative approach to aesthetic appreciation depends upon a particular form of semiotic interpretation. The American semiotician and logician Charles Sanders Peirce clarified the way signs function in his essay "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs." While a sign can also be an icon or a symbol, I call attention here to Peirce's identification of the *index*, that sign or representation which "refers to its object not so much because of any similarity or analogy with it, nor because it is associated with general characters which that object happens to possess, as because it is in dynamical (including spatial) connection both with the individual object, on the one hand, and with the senses of memory for the person for whom it serves as a sign, on the other hand."¹⁷ Just as a cumulus cloud serves as an index of convective activity from earth to atmosphere, so too does a bright yellow color become an index of a maple tree's withholding nutrients from its leaves. The object we see—a cloud or a leaf—stands in causal relation both to processes we cannot see and to our recognition of these relations as having occurred before, as being present in our memories. The recognition of the natural environment as an index of processes hidden from the eye but intelligible to the mind characterizes what I have been elaborating as the narrative dimension of aesthetic value.

Whether we see nature as the place where prescientific human beings situated some forms of spiritual power, or as the legacy of long-abandoned agrarian communities, or as the location of fascinatingly complex and seasonal cellular changes, we do in each case *read the surface of the environment as a kind of story*.

We filter the perceptual properties of nature's surface through a frame of reference that functions as narrative in character, one that contextualizes the objects before us as players in a partially invisible drama. Making the narrative explicit reveals the surface objects as dramatic ossifications of processes we can no longer see, or are unable to see.

The narrative dimension of aesthetic value privileges indexicality as a way of integrating conceptual understanding and perceptual encounter, and in appreciating the environment indexically we add directly to our store of communicable knowledge of the world. Still, while specific applications of the narrative dimension illuminate and inform discussions of values and the natural environment, they by no means exhaust all possible standpoints on the topic. When the narrative dimension of aesthetic value eclipses almost entirely the functioning of the radically different, yet no less powerful form of appreciation I have called the ambient, we have an "indexical fallacy" in metacritical aesthetic theory. The indexical fallacy occurs not in the practice of narrative appreciation *per se* but in a collapsing of all aesthetic value to the narrative dimension, to the indexical expression of mythological, historical, or scientific processes through nature. In overemphasizing the indexical element of aesthetic appreciation, philosophers of the environment have allowed the narrative dimension of value to occlude the ambient.

The ambient dimension of aesthetic value emerges as an accompaniment to, rather than a replacement of, the narrative dimension, and rounds out the ways we might attribute aesthetic value to experiences of the natural environment. Too hearty an emphasis on the narrative dimension of aesthetic value distracts us from a full acknowledgment of what we gain through knowledge by acquaintance in a more ambient, less indexical fashion. A fuller account of aesthetic value in the natural environment emerges when the knowledge furnished by both dimensions is examined in symbiotic relation.

Consider how imagination makes a significant contribution to the narrative dimension of value. Emily Brady argues consistently and broadly for this point without allowing her own theory to fall neatly into either the narrative or the ambient dimensions of aesthetic appreciation.¹⁸ The application of unseen concepts and facts to perceived natural environments involves the operation of imagination in order to make what is known amount to more than the contents of a textbook. Imagination makes the narrative dimension of aesthetic appreciation perceptually operational: We "bring in" facts and theories that we cannot see but that we understand, in appreciatively enlarging our perception of the environment. So too, nonetheless, does sensuous attentiveness to what appears before us become necessary to the operation of the narrative dimension. Imagination and sensuous attention, taken together, unveil an incipient otherness.

Via imagination we bring what is not-present to the senses into sensuous relevance: We imagine and then can "see" the processes by which cumulus clouds form, or leaves color and fall from a tree. Nonperceptual cognition animates the landscape, but in animation the breathing is done by us, in the fullness of sensu-

ous encounter. Imagination requires us to bring what is not-here, what is hidden, what is fact, into relation with what is here, what is sensuously familiar, what we feel.

Via the senses we can encounter that which stretches *beyond* textbook propositions into a full knowledge by acquaintance. Abstraction on this count becomes felt: what we know about leaves from books can be fulfilled and in one sense superseded by what we know about them in sensuous contact. For example, when I am teaching my four-year-old niece Amanda about the trees near her house, I do not tell her much about the life of the maple tree at hand. Rather, I pluck a new spring leaf and run it along her cheek, so she can feel its pliable, infant softness. I hold that leaf up to high, midday sunlight, so she can admire its iridescence. I ask her to smell the lingering scent of the sap even in these new veins. When we return in autumn, the leaves show themselves differently. The no-longer pliable maple leaf must be handled carefully to withstand our observation. Withered and curled, it no longer filters the sunlight but, its green all but gone, wears bright color of its own. The sap and its smell have dried up, though some new scent, a grave intimation of earthen autumn, can be caught near the stem. I do not tell her this, but let her feel it, let her gather in acquaintance the tactile dimensions of life.

Narrative dimensions, while conducive to epistemological communication and perhaps even inspiring what we choose to look at and feel in the first place, sometimes overlook how we ponder the world as existentially embodied beings, as individuals in search of transmogrified fact. The pondering, I suggest, remains exceedingly important and, as a form of value, remains under-theorized and thus under-acknowledged as an enduring source of aesthetic knowledge. A clarification of this neglected, ambient dimension provides more lucid access to the full range of potential aesthetic values in relation to the natural environment.

IV.

By defending the existence of the ambient dimension of aesthetic value, I do not promote a reverie-laden foray into personal musing and whimsical observation. Neither does my label, however inadequate, refer to a way of communicating or writing about aesthetic experience, nor imply stasis and space where a narrative dimension might connote movement and time. One of the problems with the ambient aesthetic is the difficulty in giving a succinct sense of it in words. Surely it connotes a feeling of being surrounded by, or infused with, an enveloping, engaging tactility, but the ambient in all its forms¹⁹ resists discursive formulation. As a way around, or into, this problem, I shall approach the ambient dimension of aesthetic value by indirect comparison with what I have already outlined as the narrative dimension of aesthetic value, as well as by briefly relating the observations of a few philosophers in relation to it. In pursuing this line of reasoning I hope to promote the integrity of the ambient dimension by demonstrating its persistence through time and divergent humanistic contexts.

Within the narrative dimension of aesthetic value we can quite easily differentiate between competing narratives and can to some degree assess those narratives for factual or social accuracy. The ambient dimension of aesthetic value, however, does not rely *in practice* upon any standards, frameworks, or narratives external to the experiencing individual. While even the narrative dimension of aesthetic value cannot be reduced to propositional knowledge and goes beyond a merely communicative function—Arnold Berleant demonstrates this effectively and at length in his theory of descriptive aesthetics²⁰—it nevertheless retains explicit ties to bodies of knowledge and realms of thought beyond the individual's encounter with the sensuous surface of the environment.

In the ambient dimension, if we do not wish to go so far as to claim that the individual loses himself or herself in aesthetic encounters with nature, then we can at least say that any references to external bodies of knowledge or thought remain implicit, or in the background of consciousness. Ronald Hepburn gives expression to this in his article, "Landscape and The Metaphysical Imagination." He acknowledges the legitimacy of wonder in relation to aesthetic experiences of the natural environment while carefully distinguishing these experiences from their noetic, or overly anthropomorphic, counterparts.²¹ Recall that the narrative dimension of aesthetic value makes the dramatic background of the perceptual surface explicit. In the ambient dimension, the environment as an index of conceptual frameworks recedes and we encounter nature as an enveloping other, a place where the experience of one's self drifts drastically away from the factual everyday. As Berleant notes, "much, perhaps most, of our appreciative experience of nature exceeds the limits of a contemplative object and refuses to be constrained within discrete boundaries."²² The usual habit of cognitive separation into categories dissipates in the face of an open encounter with that which presents itself, at least on the surface, as radically other from us. In foregoing epistemological control, we refrain, if only for a while, from boxing everything into neat cognitive packages.

If we think of the narrative dimension of aesthetic value as picking out and holding up for inspection discrete objects, events, or groups of objects and events, as a sort of mental dissection of space through time, then the ambient dimension of aesthetic value emerges when we resist such conscious epistemological organization and open ourselves to the immensity of what has been, most of the time and for many of us, elsewhere. The ambient dimension, while not easily discussed, reverberates in the philosophical recognition of it as a *sensibility*. Jane Howarth explores this from the standpoint of phenomenology in her recent article "Nature's Moods,"²³ and Gaston Bachelard pays tribute to it in his classic reflection, *The Poetics of Space*. Immensity, Bachelard reflects, takes shape in the philosophical category of daydream, where daydream contemplates grandeur in the presentation of natural forms and processes.

In point of fact, daydreaming, from the very first second, is an entirely constituted state. We do not see it start, and yet it always starts the same way, that is,

it flees the object nearby and right away it is far off, elsewhere, in the space of *elsewhere*.

When this *elsewhere* is in *natural* surroundings, that is, when it is not lodged in the houses of the past, it is immense. And one might say that daydream is *original contemplation*.²⁴

John Dewey, coming out of a radically different philosophical tradition, also recognizes and attempts to articulate a similar phenomenon, which he locates in the experience of art as well as of nature. In the aesthetic experience, says Dewey, there is "that sense of an enveloping undefined whole that accompanies every normal experience. This whole is then felt as an expansion of ourselves.... Where egoism is not made the measure of reality and value, we are citizens of this vast world beyond ourselves, and any intense realization of its presence with and in us brings a peculiarly satisfying sense of unity in itself and with ourselves."²⁵

Arthur Schopenhauer posits an entirely different thinking subject when aesthetic consciousness takes hold. In speaking of mountainously tempestuous seas, of roaring streams that make us shout to be heard, of steep cliffs, Schopenhauer uses the moment of sublime encounter to promote the ambient dimension of aesthetic value.

Then in the unmoved beholder of this scene the twofold nature of his consciousness reaches the highest distinctness. Simultaneously, he feels himself as individual, as the feeble phenomenon of will, which the slightest touch of these forces can annihilate ... and he also feels himself as the eternal, serene subject of knowing, who as the condition of every object is the supporter of this whole world, the fearful struggle of nature being only his mental picture or representation.²⁶

Aesthetic engagement,²⁷ for Schopenhauer, Dewey, Bachelard, and Howarth, has something to do with an intimacy between the human individual's mode of representing the world to itself and the serene contemplation of that representation. Such a representation draws on the sensuous as well as the cognitive self, and thus a potent source of value in the ambient dimension of aesthetic appreciation of nature might be the ways in which our encounters with the natural environment redirect us from the need to theorize the world overtly and instead encourage us to experience it in a more diffuse and unified manner.

Despite its resistance to compact or categorical objectivity, the ambient dimension of aesthetic consciousness has always found, and continues to find, a place in the homage of thinkers in our tradition. Stephen Bourassa pays ample attention to something like this in his exhaustive account *The Aesthetics of Landscape*.²⁸ Thinkers such as Pauline von Bonsdorff, Neil Evernden, Galen Johnson, Barbara Sandriss, Yi-Fu Tuan,²⁹ and the previously mentioned Berleant, Hepburn, and Howarth also address it in a great variety of places and ways. Their homage

reflects neither the detritus of a fey religiosity nor the vacuousness of an intellectually vapid new age, but instead grows sturdily out of clear observations about the practices of persons within our culture.

The aesthetic impact of the natural environment, for many of us, does not always or even primarily derive from the conscious application of narratives to what we see and understand. Rather, we also value the departure from the self-conscious, controlled, specificity-directed application of concepts to sense, and instead sometimes seek to encounter nature in a more moodful, multisensuous way. A kind of reflectiveness persists in such an experience, where we refrain from giving frameworks *to*, or deriving them *from*, the environment, but instead allow more subtle impressions to dominate us. The textures of earth as we move over them, the sounds of the winds and the wildlife and trees, the moistness or dryness of the air, the nascent colors or seasonal mutations—all can melt into a synthesized backdrop for ambient contemplation of both the backdrop itself and the sensuous way we relate to it. Such experiences have always been and remain distinctly aesthetic³⁰ and, as aesthetic, constitute a form of knowing both oneself and the world anew.

The natural environment has been widely acknowledged within our culture as a source of powerful aesthetic experiences. In order to deepen the social commitment to preserving that environment, it is always wise to attempt to persuade people with facts about the future of the planet, with pictures of devastation and projections for incipient calamity. Yet it is wise as well to educate people through acquaintance, to make and keep natural environments accessible to individuals so that they might experience the ambient dimension of aesthetic appreciation as perhaps a first and ultimately lasting point of value in their attitudes toward the natural world. The ambient dimension of aesthetic value can act as a catalyst for the inculcation of a sensibility toward the environment: ecological, political, economic, or recreational kinds of concern often grow out of this more isolated and yet fundamental kind of environmental experience. Direct experience, however, does not always give itself fully to direct communication.

As the American philosopher Susanne Langer has observed, “there is ... an important part of reality that is quite inaccessible to the formative influence of language; that is the so-called realm of ‘inner-experience,’ the life of feeling and emotion ... the form of language does not reflect the natural form of feeling, so that we cannot shape any extensive concepts of feeling with the help of ordinary discursive language.”³¹ Many of the examples I have cited manifest what I term the asymptotic character of the ambient dimension of aesthetic value. The asymptote, as we know from algebra and analytic geometry, characterizes the sort of mathematical function which, while moving closer to the x or y axis as its variables are plotted, never actually reaches either axis, even as it moves toward infinity. The ambient dimension of aesthetic value has this character. It points at, or evokes, a sense of the infinite, of wonder, of that which exceeds our grasp, yet struggles ever more closely toward articulation or plotting along the axis of human communica-

tion. At once anchored and renegade, the depth experienced in the ambient dimension of aesthetic value resists straightforward prose. Any success at drawing the asymptote closer to the concrete axis of clear understanding, even as it bounds away to infinity, is achieved by imaginative association between one set of experiences and another. And for lasting imaginative achievement, we look to poetry and the other arts.

As a translation mechanism, art finds a way of articulating where articulation does not occur with ease. The form of nature has no words. We bring words to it, but the words and sensibilities of the poet, the artist, are not the explanations of the straightforward, linear narrative. Indeed, silence remains more crucial to the ambient aesthetic than words. Of course, we *require* words, pictures, stories to make what we value about the natural environment clear to others. But to experience that value for ourselves in an ambient fashion, we need something of humility and silence; the recognition that what there is to know always exceeds our power to know it. Art offers one way of dwelling on this idea; nature walks offer another, and still, the two are intimately related in the silence of perceptual apprehension.

In the realm of good arguments, though, our silence threatens to slow down our progress. Yet, how can one argue for the value of that which sometimes eludes direct articulation? If the ambient dimension of aesthetic value not only requires for its emergence a silencing of the epistemological impulse but also expresses itself best in asymptotical forms of communication like art and poetry, how can we possibly make a case for that dimension as a powerful and worthwhile consideration in our dialogue about values and the natural environment?

V.

I have no easy or immediate solution to this difficulty. Surely any solution necessitates not only a willingness to enlarge the field of empirical data we normally consider as stable evidence in any judgment about value, but also an openness to the possibility that our present emphasis on mostly narrative dimensions of aesthetic value, even the scientific ones, are more anthropomorphic than their champions seem to believe they are. Although he defers to science in revealing the depth of time beneath the aesthetic surface of nature, Holmes Rolston recognizes the inability of the narrative dimension alone to provide anything like a full account of aesthetic value. "Landscape as phenomena is difficult to dismiss as mere phenomena, because the full story of natural history is too phenomenal, too spectacular, to be mere landscape; it is a sacrament of something noumenal. Sensitive encounter with landscape discloses dimensions of depth."³²

Of course, reducing all aesthetic appreciation of the environment to the ambient dimension of value would be prejudiced and misguided, and I hope I have not promoted anything like this in my discussion. Yet, reducing all aesthetic appreciation of the environment to the narrative dimension of value errs as well, in the direction of distilling away from experience only that which fits a highly

specific and scholarly mode, the mode of discursive, idealized expression and analysis.

Paradoxically, the realization of otherness in our encounter with nature occurs from our standpoint as subjective, particularly embodied individuals: the *feel* of the not-Self emerges in a form of awareness traditionally associated with the Self, an existential awareness. It inculcates a sensibility and promotes an attitude of wonder and humility with regard to the complex processes of the natural world, a world that simply cannot be exhausted in our attempts to define and confine it, even as those attempts have become more codified and stable with the advent of scientific method.

As philosophers, we are confined to the narrative in making a case for the non-narrative. I have here attempted to draw attention to the ambient dimension of aesthetic value in a roundabout, almost sidelong, way, and yet I have remained firmly within the tradition of arguing from example, analogy, correlation, and cause. This does not erase ambient dimensions from the spectrum of important factors within value, however, and it is up to us to widen our frame of reference to include these, rather than to exclude them from the reach of our propositions. Just as the narrative approach implies a semiotic of indexicality, the ambient approach conjures the curve of the asymptote, the function whose trajectory at once eludes perfect correspondence and yet points out to infinity.

The resistance of ambient aesthetic dimensions to direct articulation poses difficulties for practical decisions concerning values and the natural environment. However, these are not insurmountable difficulties, should we be willing to face the complexity and richness of aesthetic value head-on and adjust our methods of accounting for it accordingly. Alluding to the value of a muted, ambient aesthetic is not impossible when that approach is both differentiated from a narrative aesthetic and understood to be flourishing within and alongside it. Difficulty of communication neither destabilizes nor erases the validity of existential awareness emerging from aesthetic engagement with natural environments. It is a challenge to the philosopher, nevertheless, to make the case for its legitimacy as a form of aesthetic value without compromising either its alienation from, or debt to, more discursive modes of expression that might lend themselves usefully to the defense of objective judgments.³³

Notes

- 1 Frank Sibley, "Aesthetic Concepts," *The Philosophical Review* 67 (1959): 421-450, reprinted in *Collected Papers on Aesthetics*, ed. Cyril Barrett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), as well as Frank Sibley, "General Criteria in Aesthetics," in *Essays on Aesthetics: Perspectives on the Work of Monroe Beardsley*, ed. John Fischer (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983).
- 2 I realize that some intriguing and valuable theories of environmental aesthetics do not

fall strictly within the dichotomy that I set out here. It is nevertheless my observation that many of the most influential and current theories do indeed fall on one side of the cleft or the other, and so in this sense I call attention to the significance of the split as well as to the divergent content of the dichotomous theories themselves.

- 3 Yrjö Sepänmaa, *The Beauty of Environment: A General Model for Environmental Aesthetics* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1986), p. 79. [Editors' Note: See also Yrjö Sepänmaa, "Environmental Stories: Speaking and Writing Nature," *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 19 (1999): 73-85 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 16].]
- 4 Diane Ackerman, *A Natural History of the Senses* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), p. 240.
- 5 Marcia Muelder Eaton, *Aesthetics and the Good Life* (Fairleigh: Dickinson University Press, 1989), p. 92. [Editors' Note: See also Marcia Muelder Eaton, "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 149-156 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 9].]
- 6 Ken Weber, *Walks and Rambles in Rhode Island* (Woodstock, VT: Backcountry Publications, 1986), p. 26.
- 7 Holmes Rolston III, "Does Aesthetic Appreciation of Landscapes need to be Science-Based?" *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 35 (1995): 376. [Editors' Note: See also Holmes Rolston III, "The Aesthetic Experience of Forests," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 157-166 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 10].]
- 8 Saito expresses and refines her views in a series of articles appearing over the last ten years, but the most comprehensive introduction to her views appears in her unpublished doctoral dissertation: Yuriko Saito, *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature: Western and Japanese Perspectives* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1983). Also see Yuriko Saito, "The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 101-111. [Editors' Note: See also Yuriko Saito "Appreciating Nature on its Own Terms," *Environmental Ethics* 20 (1998): 135-149 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 7].]
- 9 Eaton, *Aesthetics*, p. 106.
- 10 Ackerman, *Natural History*, pp. 257-258.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 259.
- 12 Allen Carlson, "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, eds. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 213. [Editors' Note: See also Allen Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1979): 267-276 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 2].]
- 13 Carlson, "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature," p. 221.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 For a fascinating discussion of the ways in which both anthropomorphic and subjective constructs enter into the data presentation of objectively construed science, see Peter Alpert, "The Boulder and the Sphere," *Environmental Values* 4 (1995): 3-16.
- 16 Carlson, "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature," pp. 220-221.
- 17 Charles Sanders Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs" [1923], in

- Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology*, ed. Robert E. Innis (Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 13.
- 18 See Emily Brady, "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 139-147 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 8]. See also Emily Brady, "Don't Eat the Daisies: Disinterestedness and the Situated Aesthetic," *Environmental Values* 7 (1998): 97-114.
 - 19 The ambient bears a close relationship to, but may be distinguished from, the meditative consciousness, where an individual contemplates the world in a receptive, rather than a proactive, manner. Ambiance connotes a sense of environment, of being surrounded, while the meditative perhaps implies a distancing of oneself from that which is contemplated. I thank Arnold Berleant for making the importance of this distinction apparent during a conversation at "Aesthetics of the Forest: The Second International Conference of Environmental Aesthetics" at Punkaharju, Finland, June 1996.
 - 20 Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), p. 26.
 - 21 Ronald Hepburn, "Landscape and the Metaphysical Imagination," *Environmental Values* 5 (1996): 191-204 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 6].
 - 22 Berleant, *Aesthetics*, p. 166 [this volume, p. 80]. [Editors' Note: This reference is to Chapter 11 of *Aesthetics of the Environment*, "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature" [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 3].]
 - 23 J.M. Howarth, "Nature's Moods," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 35 (1995): 108-120.
 - 24 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 183-184.
 - 25 John Dewey, *Art as Experience* [1934] (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980), p. 195.
 - 26 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* [1818], trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), Volume I, §39, pp. 204-205.
 - 27 The term engagement as invoked in this context is more general and less precise than the concept of "engagement" identified and developed by Arnold Berleant in his book *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), though its use in relation to the thinkers cited here does acknowledge their debt to a philosophical tradition that takes seriously some of the same aesthetic values explored by Berleant as well.
 - 28 Stephen Bourassa, *The Aesthetics of Landscape* (New York: Belhaven Press, 1991).
 - 29 Pauline von Bonsdorff, "Paces of Change," in *Ympäristöestetiikan polkuja* (Lahti, Finland: International Institute of Applied Aesthetics, 1996): pp. 130-138; Neil Evernden, *The Natural Alien* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); Galen Johnson, "'For the Comfort and Happiness of Each Other': The Language and Experience of Wood," delivered at "Second Annual Back to the Things Themselves Conference," Southern Illinois University, March 1996; Barbara Sandrisser, "Cultivating Commonplaces: Sophisticated Vernacularism in Japan," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 201-210; Yi-Fu Tuan, *Passing Strange*

and Wonderful: Aesthetics, Nature and Culture (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1993).

- 30 Although the term “aesthetic” can be interpreted in a variety of ways, I use it in the general sense of involving conscious and imaginative attention to sensuously evoked aspects of the world. Even literature imaginatively harnesses the sensuous in the conjuring of its own ontology, its own functionally construed universe of things, people, and places.
- 31 Susanne Langer, *Philosophical Sketches* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), pp. 88-89.
- 32 Rolston, “Does Aesthetic Appreciation,” p. 384.
- 33 Several people have read or discussed the contents of this paper with me and each of them contributed greatly to its improvement. I would like to thank Arnold Berleant, Allen Carlson, Galen Johnson, Jane Rolston, Holmes Rolston, and Yrjö Sepänmaa for their valuable insights and incisive suggestions; Ossi Naukkarinen for going over the entire draft with care; and especially Roland and Eva Gustavsson and the students at SLU Alnarp, Sweden, for their creativity and questioning in helping me to formulate the dichotomies discussed here.

Appreciating Natural Beauty as Natural

Ronald Moore



I. Introduction

Scholars who write about natural beauty are fond of reminding us that nature must be appreciated as *natural*. By this they generally mean that the canons and categories of appreciation we normally use in taking the measure of beauty in human-made objects—especially artworks—are out of place in the world of natural things. After all, they argue, mountains, marmots, and monsoons are not intentional objects; their meaning is not measured against the purposes of any (mortal) creator. The aesthetic concepts we apply to paintings, plays, and poems, whose nature and value are tightly tied to the purposes organizing their creation, do not apply to them. Mountains just are what they are, the evolved products of age-old geophysical forces predating and indifferent to human life. It is precisely because paintings of mountains, as opposed to mountains themselves, are products of human will that we can regard them as well- or ill-composed, belonging to this or that style, sentimental, idealized, ironic, morbid, and so on.

Clearly there is a great deal of merit in this view. It is no less foolish and distorting to look at a mountain landscape as though it really were a painting—faulting it or admiring it for its compositional balance, say—than it is to look at a painting as though it really were a mountain landscape—faulting it or admiring it for its repleteness of ecological detail. The difference in intentionality entails a host of differences in the parameters of response. We don't approach the objects of natural and artifactual beauty in the same way. We set ourselves up to enjoy a symphony by drawing upon our familiarity with other performances of the work, other works of the same or similar genre, standard techniques of classical composition, the tonal characteristics of instruments employed, and so on. When we are delighted with the unexpected power of a given passage or disappointed in the tempi, our critical awareness is tempered and guided by our knowledge of the canons, categories, and standards that apply to composition and performance of works of this type; we hear the work as similar to, or different from, others that are in various ways like it. By contrast, we set ourselves up to enjoy a walk along a mountain stream by doing away with many, if not most, categories of learned appreciation and by opening ourselves to a freer form of enjoyment. When we are struck with the sudden aspect of a field of fireweed and toadflax, our pleasure seems more

nearly unmediated; we needn't know a lot about standard botanical characteristics of these species, differences from, and similarities to, other related wildflowers, their ecological niche, and so on, to gain an intense aesthetic satisfaction from the experience.

But it is easy to overstate the difference between these two modes of appreciation. The aesthetic enjoyment of artworks is not purely a matter of locating them in a field of categories and concepts; nor is the enjoyment of nature a purely unmediated concession to sense over thought. Nothing is more evident in the enterprise of appreciation than that each of these modes of awareness feeds off the other. We obviously, and habitually, deploy concepts, techniques, ways of speaking, background assumptions, analogies, allusions, and notions of aesthetic relevance that work for us in one domain *because* they work for us in the other. It is useful to see a sea fog as reminiscent of a Whistler *Nocturne* precisely because it calls our attention to features of an ambient sensory environment that come to the foreground only in light of our prior experience of the artwork. And it is useful to see a sunset as particularly splendid because our eyes have been trained to see splendor in sunsets by contemplating Turners. To generalize the point, our experience in reflecting on the aesthetic qualities of artworks serves us well in regarding analogous properties throughout life, not only in thinking about the qualities and compositions of nature, but in thinking about those of interior design, automobiles, prose, politics, and the pattern of living we create daily. And, similarly, our familiarity with the particularities of natural objects is a useful preparation for our enjoyment of art, but not only art; it grounds our delectation of countless analogous features and configurations of elements in all of our enterprises.

This conclusion may seem platitudinous. Nature prepares us for art and art prepares us for nature. I argue in what follows that the point is deeper than it at first appears. Despite the fact that the point is both simple and obvious, it has generated a substantial amount of philosophical controversy. The core of the controversy lies in the fact that, although we are reasonably confident of the critical and analytical framework appropriate to intelligent appreciation of artworks, we are less confident of the corresponding framework of ideas appropriate to intelligent appreciation of natural objects. We are generally prepared to believe that our aesthetic response to natural objects is, despite any conceptual deficit, not naïve, not unsuited to its objects, and fulsome. But, if the appreciation of natural objects is not supported by *some* kind of cognitive apparatus, something like—even remotely like—that which supports our judgments in the artworld, how can it be anything but shallow, subjective, and inaccessible to critical assessment? At present, philosophers are generally inclined to respond to this question in one of two ways. Conceptualists, like Allen Carlson and Marcia Eaton, insist that there are, after all, categories and concepts that can be deployed to help aesthetic judgments in respect to natural objects assume the legitimacy, such as it is, of aesthetic judgments in the artworld. Non-conceptualists, like Arnold Berleant, Emily Brady, and Noël Carroll insist that the fundamental twist in our view of nature is a liberation of reflection

from prior conceptual frameworks, so that imagination can gain ascendance over thought.¹

In this essay I argue for a view of natural aesthetics that aims to mediate between these views. On the one hand, I want to reaffirm nature's natural connection with our experience of art and, on the other hand, I want to free aesthetic appreciation of nature from both of the two masters to whom it has recently fled: science and unfettered imagination. The view I want to advance takes natural objects as objects of aesthetic awareness and appreciation in a way that respects their difference from artifacts while remaining accessible to many of categories of analysis, criticism, and appreciation that apply to artworks. My claim is that we approach the qualities of things we think worthy of admiration in nature through lenses we have developed for thinking of aesthetic qualities at large—not art, not literature, not music, not politics, not urban planning, not landscape design, but all of these and more.

II. Glass Flowers

One of the great treasures of Harvard University is the Ware Collection of Glass Models of Plants, or, as it is more simply known to its more than one hundred thousand annual viewers, the glass flowers. The glass flowers are not art, or at least not designed to have been appreciated as art. Created in Germany with apparently irreproducible skill between the years 1887 and 1936 by Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka as accurate models of various species of plant life, they were meant to be pedagogical tools for the instruction of students whose access to botanical specimens would otherwise be constrained by the vicissitudes of transport and the periodicity of seasons. The collection comprises more than eight hundred exquisitely fashioned models, ranging from truly exotic plants, scarcely ever seen, to common weeds. Invariably, viewers are powerfully impressed by the lifelike quality of the models. In fact, such was the skill of the Blaschkas that it would be nearly impossible to tell which was glass and which was a real flower if a model and its subject were placed side by side.

One of the specimens represented is *Chicorium intybus*, common chicory. This is a delicate roadside wildflower, common throughout North America. Its long, straight, striated stalks are festooned with star clusters of short, triangular leaves and compact, blue, daisy-like flowers. Providing they can resist discounting its charm by its commonness, many people regard it as a pretty, even beautiful, flower. Now suppose that, having been struck by the beauty of the glass chicory specimen, a museum visitor were to walk outside and discover at the parking lot's edge a living chicory plant, a plant whose physical differences from that of the glass plant were visually indiscernible. Having found the human-made chicory beautiful, should the viewer, to be consistent (i.e. *aesthetically* consistent), find the live chicory equally beautiful? If we are tempted to think otherwise, won't that be because we are implicitly counting the factors of illusion, hard work, and rarity

into our assessment of the glass flower's beauty? But are not these factors contributors to the model's worth in ways other than in the respect of beauty (and other exclusively aesthetic considerations)? It is tempting to think that we should be able to discount all the background factors—including everything relating to the two objects' disparate causal histories, insurable values, age, and so on—so as to isolate the immediate, foreground sensory experience in which they are alike. After all, aesthetic regard concerns itself fundamentally with the manifold of *sensory awareness*, and not with all that causes it or is caused by it. So it would seem reasonable to conclude that if the glass chicory and the living chicory *look* the same, then, so far as the sense of sight is concerned at least, the two should be deemed equally beautiful, perhaps even aesthetically identical.

To extend the hypothesis, we might suppose that a team of latter-day super-Blaschkas, empowered with all the tools of modern simulation technology, might set about to replicate each of the other sensible characteristics of chicory in a synthetic model. The olfactory qualities would prove no problem to any modern perfumier; chicory has a very faint and unsubtle fragrance. The gustatory qualities might be more of a challenge; chicory is famous for its distinctive flavor, which many people believe (wrongly, I think) improves the taste of coffee. Still, were native chicory not so widely available (if an epidemic plant disease were to deprive all living chicory plants of their characteristic tang), it is a virtual certainty that chemical laboratories could soon produce an artificial chicory flavoring satisfactory to the most discerning chicory-coffee aficionado. (And perhaps they already have.) It is easy to imagine that synthetic fiber scientists could replicate the tactile qualities of all parts of the chicory plant, not only its general feel, but its malleability, ductility, tensile strength, etc. And, whatever minimal sounds the plant makes in this or that atmospheric condition could be easily synthesized in any well-equipped sound studio. So, the success of such a venture in plant synthesis is certainly not beyond imagining. Let us assume, then, that we have two specimens at our disposal, a real chicory plant and an artificial chicory plant that cannot be distinguished from it on any sensory basis. Must we now accept the conclusion that the two are aesthetically identical, so that *anything* we are warranted in saying pertinent to the aesthetic status of the one we must be willing to say about the other, and any response we make to either must be made to both?

Some people will no doubt find this an easy question. They will say that the hypothesis has been forged in such a way as to exclude any basis of discrimination between the two, so that the question answers itself. Just as an animal breeder who is presented with a creature and its perfect clone cannot tell them apart (for that's what it means to be a *perfect* clone), the aesthetic judge who is presented with a real plant and its perfect synthetic replica cannot, *ex hypothesi*, draw an aesthetic distinction between them. But others will resist the pull of the hypothesis. They will wish to answer the question in the negative because they think that, the physical identity of the two plants notwithstanding, something is present in the natural plant and absent in the artificial plant that bears importantly on *how* the two are

seen. There is an important difference, they will want to insist, between perceiving a set of characteristics in an object and perceiving that same set of characteristics as *natural* to that object. To perceive something as a product of nature is not to perceive one more thing about it; it is to change the way we perceive everything about it.

This response is pretty much the one Immanuel Kant gave to the question more than two hundred years ago. In *The Critique of Judgment*, Kant commended the observer who takes an immediate interest in the natural rather than artifactual beauty, and went so far as to say that the former perspective is favorable to a certain moral feeling (and is indeed “a mark of a good soul”). His way of delineating the natural and artifactual frames of mind draws him directly into our conundrum:

He who by himself (and without any design of communicating his observations to others) regards the beautiful figure of a wild flower ... with admiration and love; who would not willingly miss it in nature although it may bring him some damage; who still less wants any advantage from it—he takes an immediate and also an intellectual interest in the beauty of nature. That is, it is not merely the form of the product of nature which pleases him, but its very presence pleases him....

But it is noteworthy that if we secretly deceived this lover of the beautiful by planting in the ground artificial flowers (which can be manufactured exactly like real ones) ... and he discovered the deceit, the immediate interest that he previously took in them would disappear at once, though perhaps a different interest, viz. the interest of vanity in adorning his chamber with them for the eyes of others, would take its place. This thought then must accompany our intuition and reflection on beauty, viz. that nature has produced it; and on this alone is based the immediate interest that we take in it.²

Here Kant appears to be saying that it is an essential and proper part of our aesthetic regard for natural objects to perceive them as other than collections of sensible features; it is to perceive these features as drawn together by natural forces (of growth, transformation, and evolution, let us say) rather than by artifice. The attention we give to natural objects can amount to an immediate interest, and even a form of love, only when their very presence is understood as predicated on processes removed from human design.³

But, what is it, exactly, about the thought that a thing emanated from natural process rather than human manufacture (which is, after all, just one more attenuated form of natural process, if you take the human participation in the great chain of being seriously) that should render our contemplation of it so immediately pleasing and valuable? And what is it that should lead to such disdain (or at least “disappearance of immediate interest”) when what was thought to be a flower is ultimately discovered to be its artificial counterpart? The production of nature look-alikes can be, in its own way, both pleasing and moving, as the popular reac-

tion to the Blaschka flowers demonstrates. Why should the matter of origin count for so much? As Kant puts it, our experience of the one is rendered replete with immediate pleasure, love, and even an intimation of moral consciousness, while the other is purged of all of these. Is prejudice about origins here anything more than an eco-sensitive analog of the social prejudice endemic in human society that irrationally inflates or reduces our estimate of others according to their ethnic, national, or even regional origins?

The easy answer to this question is that we value the naturalness of the natural flower because it is full of a past and a future bound up with the rest of nature, and therefore implicated in it. We admire and respect nature, in turn, for a host of reasons—reasons that involve a tangle of normative concerns ranging from the ecological to the theological. Many of these may be hard to tease apart from aesthetic concerns. For example, our judgments about what is morally good in nature may seem nearly inextricable from our judgments about natural beauty. As we have seen, Kant endorses as a fundamental value in the contemplation of nature an activity he regarded as mingling aesthetic and moral virtues in the making of goodness.⁴ And a good number of recent writers have echoed Kant's sentiment, if for various non-Kantian reasons.⁵ On Kant's analysis, even if the natural object and the human-made object are, in all perceptible qualities, identical, then deeming the natural *as* natural would impute to its object some moral weight, or at least some weight other than, and different from, whatever weight it enjoys simply as an exemplar of its type.⁶

If, however, we are not as inclined as Kant and his philosophical successors to affiliate the contemplation of natural beauty with moral edification, on what basis will appreciating natural objects as natural make them special, and even superior to, their non-natural counterparts? And, if we put aside not only moral features, but *all* value-normative characteristics apart from the aesthetic, what is left that should incline us to take the chicory plant to be importantly different from, and perhaps even superior to, its glass twin just because the former and not the latter is *natural*?

III. Warhol and Blaschka

This puzzle about flowers and their artificial counterparts echoes a well-known example that lies at the heart of modern aesthetic theory. Andy Warhol created artifacts that mimicked their originals. It is fair to say that one of his *Brillo Boxes* was just as indistinguishable from a real Brillo Box as a Blaschka chicory is indistinguishable from its natural counterpart. In a justly famous article, Arthur Danto argues that these apparent indiscernibles *become* non-identical when we regard them through a certain conceptual lens—a lens involving an atmosphere of theory and a knowledge of the history of art, a lens involving a special, interpretive sense of “is” that Danto calls the “is of artistic identification.”⁷ The Warhol Brillo box distinguishes itself from the grocery-store Brillo box by being swept up by this

theoretical mode of regard into an artworld. It is tempting to think that a parallel answer should be available in the case of the Blaschka chicory and its real-world look-alike. It is tempting, that is to say, to suppose that the difference between the artifact and the natural object should be, like the difference between the artwork and the quotidian artifact, resolvable by invoking the interpretive lens of theory. But is there an “is” of natural aesthetic identification? Is there, that is to say, a special mode of deeming that uniquely applies to natural objects in the appreciation of their aesthetic features?

Some philosophers seem to think there is. On their view, we implicitly invoke it when we view nature as natural. Like Danto’s artworld, the natureworld, if we can call it that, becomes discernible (and properly appreciable) only in an atmosphere of history and theory—natural history and scientific theory, as it usually turns out. Underlying such a view is the conceptualist assumption that the way we come to understand things in general—the way we see them for what they are—is by invoking the right conceptual sorting devices (categories, taxonomic divisions, classes of similar types, and the like) and subsuming instances under them. Thus, the this-and-here item is made intelligible as an example of a given sort. It is by invoking the concept “sonata” that a certain form of musical composition can be heard for what it *is*, as making sense and being good, bad, or indifferent, as having features that are standard for works of its type and allow us to become aware of the *Gestalt* it shares with other relevantly similar works.⁸ Warhol’s *Brillo Box* falls away from its real-world look-alikes when, and only when, it is seen through the concept of Pop Art construction. If it were not subsumed under the category of Pop Art artifact (or some similar *Gestalt*-indicating concept), it would fail to qualify at all as a work of art. By parity of reasoning, one might suppose that the Blaschka chicory falls apart from its real-world chicory counterpart just when the former is seen through the concept of a museum model of display and the latter is seen through the biological concept appropriate to its species and type.

Applying the general conceptualist assumption to natural objects, the twofold claim is first, that, if the concepts and categories we have chosen are the right ones, they give us a “fix” on the nature of these objects, and thus provide us with a necessary (although certainly not a sufficient) condition for appreciating, judging, or simply contemplating them; and second, that there are concepts and categories appropriate to the aesthetic contemplation of natural objects. The dominant view is that, in today’s world,⁹ these concepts and categories are supplied by natural history and natural science; these are what give us the true and objective account of nature and its contents.

Non-conceptualists argue that the role of theory in natural aesthetics is quite the opposite. Whereas, they insist, it is appropriate to regard human-made things as fitting into, and evaluated under, human-made categories and concepts, it is distortive and misleading to impose the same sorts of cognitive constraints on nature. After all, nature is free, unbounded by classifications in its splendid diversity, and potentially open to perceptual delight in endlessly various ways. To burden it with

categorial subsumption, or even analogy to other modes of experience, is to belie its unique charm. Just as the conceptualists urge the explanatory categories of science on natural objects on the ground that science presents things as they are, so the non-conceptualists insist that leaving natural objects as they are means leaving the artificial cognitive framing devices at home.

Part of the impetus for this view comes from Kant. Kant urged us to regard judgments of beauty (in nature as in art) as fundamentally detached from understanding, and only indirectly stimulating it. If, as Kant supposes, our regard for the beauty of a natural chicory plant is freed from the thought “chicory” and all associated taxonomic frames born in the botany laboratory, we can look admiringly at it for what it is, not as a specimen of its type. And, in doing so, we can become aware of all those features that are unique to its individual appearance in the here and now. Another part of the impetus comes from the latter-day aesthetic attitude theorists, such as Jerome Stolnitz, who have insisted that proper aesthetic awareness of an object demands a disinterested and sympathetic attention to it for its own sake, setting aside all the intellectual baggage we usually carry to our projects.¹⁰ If contemplating natural objects for their own sake requires abandonment not only of our everyday worries, aspirations, doubts, and so on, but also of the very intellectual apparatus that we bring to our everyday world to make it manageable, then it will be imperative to experience nature a-conceptually, let alone non-scientifically. This position gives free rein to imagination. Each item of observation in the natural context invites its own response, and each response provides its own constellation of impulses to the subject. There is no reason to suppose that these impulses correspond to categories established by prior comprehension. So the aesthetic appreciation of natural objects transcends, or eclipses, the ways we are accustomed to thinking not only about art, but about everything.

No sensible person will deny that both science and imagination inform our appreciation of nature in important ways. Nevertheless, both the conceptualist position and the non-conceptualist position I have outlined are seriously flawed. In what follows, I want to defend a view that draws lessons from their failings while it capitalizes on their admitted strengths.

IV. Science and the Nature of Nature

The foremost exponent of the conceptualist position is Allen Carlson. In a series of stylish and forcefully argued articles over the last twenty years, Carlson has insistently grounded aesthetic regard of the natural world in the framework of understanding provided by natural science. The argument, which has never deviated in its essentials while contouring its borders in response to critics, is essentially this: Objects of our aesthetic attention in the natural world are not works of art; they are natural. Our appreciation of them must therefore be a way of thinking and responding that is fitted to the natural order. What we have come to know about nature objectively is cumulated in natural science. Therefore, natural science

provides the only reasonable basis for appreciation of natural objects, corresponding in its own way to our developed standards of appreciation in the arts (knowledge of types, traditions, historical deviations, and so on). Relying on natural science, we can appreciate the chicory plant as an environmentally integral component in the wider natural order. Relying on natural science, we can see how this specimen is relevantly like and unlike others. This way of viewing the chicory plant affirms that this object is situated in a natural environment, and that is essential to our seeing it (aesthetically and otherwise) for what it is.¹¹

The first problem with this argument is that it wrongly assumes that there is in the natural world a fact of the matter and that this fact is especially accessible to science. We should remember that it is the business of science to see what is similar as alike, and what happens as conforming to common rules of action. The artist may be struck with a feature of this particular chicory plant that leads her to take delight in it especially—say, the way that branch catches the light and brings it up against the shadow of the stalk. And so may we delight in it as admirers of the natural beauty of the plant apart from any artistic objective. But, science doesn't help us here. Science looks at the plant as chicory and sees it as an exemplar whose properties are tied to its type. To see the chicory plant as chicory is not to see it in the full range of its appearance. Categories are sometimes helpful in framing our experience of nature (or in inducing a conspectus of attention); but sometimes they aren't. A given object may fit in several categories, or uncertainly in any category, or (especially in the case of objects of first impression) in no category at all.

The limiting condition on scientific knowledge is not some dim barrier of mystery, but simply its inapplicability to the unique. The sciences are bound to understand individual objects only as members of classes of things and to understand events as subject to generally applicable laws. The eye of the aesthetic observer, whether trained on artworks or on nature, is concerned to see unique aspects of things—how this odd clump of chicory catches the afternoon light, how this shattering icepack sounds, how this waterfall spray feels. Not *qua* chicory, *qua* icepack, *qua* waterfall; but simply *qua* this-here-object-of-regard.

Second, in our experience of nature, the object of contemplation is often not a thing that has a scientifically recognized type, but rather an indefinable constellation of features. Nature does not consist of a sum of natural kinds. Much of what we admire in nature is nameless, not because a category is missing in our repertoire, but because it is a combination of looks, sounds, smells, glints, hues, swirls, and so on that simply have no names. These various features are drawn together into a conspectus of appreciation not by an organizing category, but by one or another informal framing device we call upon. We may for a while become aware of natural beauty in a protuberance of rock, moss, and varied plant life that looks composed into a unit of delectation just by its sunlit and shadowed contours and its relative isolation from its neighbors. We may take the graceful rhythm of wave action in a pond, its ever-changing patterns of lines and lights, as an aesthetic whole because just this much is marked out by the disturbance of wind. We may

find, on a walk through the woods, that the fragrance of the conifers, the susurration of the leafy undergrowth, the feel of the soil underfoot, and the sudden aspect of a dead ground squirrel come together in an experience whose poignancy is organized by a general awareness of the cycle of life, death, and renewal. In each case, the framing at work is temporary and malleable; but, even as we move about in it and reposition the frame ("Now look at the lake from this side!"), we draw upon it to give us a something-here-and-now as the object of our aesthetic awareness.

More than anyone else, it is Ronald Hepburn who has drawn attention to the importance of the aesthetic conspectus, as opposed to categories and subsumables, in imparting wholeness and focus to appreciation of nature. Hepburn insists that nature is frameless; but he denies that this means we cannot, by combining imagination with informed perspective, achieve a *rapprochement* with nature in which we "realize" what we observe. Realizing the natural object occurs when, for this reason or that, our perceptions find a place to dwell and linger.¹² As he points out, in our response to the flight of swifts, or the fall of an autumn leaf, or a wide expanse of sand and mud, the natural categories involved play at best a minor role in our appreciation.¹³ I may care very little whether the birds whose graceful pattern I observe are swifts or larks, whether the leaf falls from a maple or an ash, and whether I am on a salt marsh or river estuary. My aesthetic attention is drawn to aspects of the natural spectacle that stand importantly apart from any category or concept. I am delighted by the peculiar way—there is no word—that the birds, twisting in their flight, catch the light just so, and then just so again. Natural objects are often, in this way, an immediate substance of my sensory awareness; they are not just this or that, but the way this or that looks, feels, sounds, and so on. They are aspects, figurations, fragrances, and the like, which may have been cultivated by the contemplation of things of this or that type, but yet are importantly free of the type itself.

Thirdly, there is an obvious way in which cognition can interfere with delectation. In a famous passage from *Life on the Mississippi*, Mark Twain admits that once he had mastered the language of the water and come to know all of its features, the grace, beauty, and poetry of the Mississippi River disappeared.¹⁴ Similarly, we may find that our experience of natural objects or natural settings is disturbed by what we have come to know about them. Our knowledge that a given object of our attention is *only* a chicory plant may detract from our awareness of its particular beauty in this light, under these circumstances, with this breeze, and so on. We have all been on walks through gardens when we didn't know the names of the flowers. It is hard to think that we would necessarily be in a better position to appreciate them aesthetically if we knew their names. Sometimes knowledge spoils experience. Knowing just what a thing is captures it in a category, and in that way makes it comfortable to us, whereas not knowing what a thing is and seeing it as just one more nameless splendor makes it uncomfortable, exciting, and therefore, in its own way, important.

So, although natural science gives us lots of information about nature, it does

not provide an account of the *nature* of nature needed to support the particular forms of appreciation we often bring to natural experience. By being indelibly committed to the cognitive, the categorial, and the regular, science provides no means of illuminating those aspects of our reflection on natural objects that is non-cognitive, particular, and anomalous.

V. Imagination and the Limits of the Natural

Those who find the conceptualist position unacceptable may be inclined to agree with the view advanced by a host of non-conceptualists that aesthetic regard for natural objects is mainly a matter of imagination, or something like it, rather than understanding. The idea here is that certain aspects of our awareness *not* comprehended in any of our scientific categories are central to our genuine appreciation of aesthetic objects. Emily Brady emphasizes the role of imagination. Noël Carroll emphasizes the role of emotional arousal. Arnold Berleant emphasizes the role of personal engagement with the environment. Other theorists emphasize other aspects of awareness. What binds them together is their common commitment to a view that the central features of natural aesthetic awareness are detached from concepts.

Kant, again, is the inspiration for those who want to take the appreciation of nature around the subjective turn. By urging us to see beauty judgments as cut off from information about their objects, he freed our sense of beauty from its intellectual entanglements. But Kant did not think that, under his theory, just anything you please could be beautiful. And, similarly, non-conceptualists have to draw a line between what they think is a reasonable attribution of aesthetic value and what is not.

The problem here seems to lie with the notion of imagination (and allied non-cognitive vectors of appreciation). As some theorists see it, imagination is a free agency, penetrating its objects in a variety of ways. Brady identifies four ways: exploratory, projective, ampliative, and revelatory.¹⁵ Carroll identifies a variety of ways by which we may be moved by nature, responding to objects and events with a range of appropriate emotions.¹⁶ Berleant identifies the capacity we have for focusing on the wholeness and integrity of a situation in creating conditions for our engagement with it.¹⁷ But the fundamental problem with these views and all other non-conceptualist approaches is the inherent limitlessness of the non-conceptual. If, as between understanding and imagination, nature is committed to the unrestricted province of the latter, there can be no bounds on what we make of it. A river can be a bookmark and a star can be a good luck charm.¹⁸

A second problem with the non-conceptual approach has been pointed out by Carlson. It is that the more nature is regarded as a realm free from the understanding-marshaling influence of science, the more it becomes a mystery—alien, aloof, distant, unknowable. It is a short step from declaring natural beauty ineffable to declaring it unintelligible. The more mysterious nature is made to appear,

the more inaccessible it is to our inquiring intelligence. As Carlson puts the point, "The mystery and aloofness of nature are a gulf, an emptiness, between us and nature; they are that by which we separate ourselves from nature. Thus, they cannot constitute a means by which we can attain any appreciation of nature whatsoever."¹⁹

The trick is to find a way to respect the intuitions that drive these views apart. I think this can easily be done: First, there is no denying that nature is something about which scientists know a lot. Second, knowledge clearly does not exhaust our reflection on natural objects. Third, imagination is an essential ingredient in our appreciative involvement with anything. It ought to be possible to build a perspective on the aesthetic value of natural objects that incorporates both natural science and imagination without giving pride of place to either. This is precisely what I aim to do.

VI. Syncretic Aesthetics

What I want to argue for here is both a way of addressing the cleft between the rival views I have described and of re-integrating our thinking about art and nature. First I will draw upon the prior discussion to make five theoretical points; then I will pull them together to reach a conclusion that makes room for both science and imagination.

My first point is this: If two things look alike (and are in all other sensible respects indistinguishable), then they are aesthetic twins. So, if the natural chicory and its synthetic counterpart are indistinguishable in the relevant respects, they are aesthetic twins. Now, if twins are to be separated in such a case, they will be separated as twins are in other instances. That is, features other than their origin will be taken into account. In the case of Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* and their look-alike counterparts, the "is" of artistic identity does the trick. But that artworld device works because a human-made institution provides a scheme of deeming (that, in Danto's example, makes it apt to say of a given patch of paint on a Breughel painting "that is Icarus") in relation to human-made works. Here the roles of convention and social consent are large. If there is an "is" of natural aesthetic identification, the roles of conventions and consent are minimal. As Danto has repeatedly pointed out, it is, in a sense, theory that makes art possible. But it isn't theory that makes the live chicory plant possible. The "natureworld," if that is what we want to call the full range of natural aesthetic experience (actual and possible), is in some ways quite independent of our judgments.

The second point is that taking a natural object as natural is not simply a matter of regarding it as non-human-made. First, we should admit that, in our modern world, most of what we want to call "natural" is already, to some degree, human-made. We have carved out the areas we want to leave "unspoiled," and we have reserved other areas for limited access with the idea that those who see them will get a sense of what nature is really like. Sunsets often look the way they do

because of pollution we create. When a great glacier calves, and tons of ice plummet into the sea, part of the job was done by gravity and part by the heat we have been injecting into the atmosphere. But, second, nature is not confined to what nature-seeking tourists come to see. The volvox colony in the microscope is nature; Orion's belt in the evening sky is nature; the bulge of my tulip in the spring earth is nature; my sneeze is nature. When we speak about nature in general we are inclined to talk about the kind of experience folks have when they get out of their urban environments to see the unspoiled world beyond. But, there is no truly unspoiled world. And there is a natural world right there in the place they left. Clouds come everywhere, as do bugs and weeds.

The third point is that the perspective of science is not the perspective most people bring to the experience of nature; and it is rarely the source of the delight we experience when we enjoy natural beauty. There are, to be sure, moments when we take pleasure in seeing this or that object as one of its type, a rocky promontory as an example of geologic upthrust, for example. But there are, equally, moments when our aesthetic pleasure consists in deliberate attention to nameless congeries of natural occurrences. One summer, on the Oregon coast, I knelt down to observe the ever-shifting patterns resulting from the intersection of multi-colored beach sand and streams running to the sea. There was a wonderful confluence of shapes and colors, fascinating in their sinuous interaction and dissipation. It was simply beautiful, so beautiful that dragging myself away from it was almost painful. But there was no thought that it was beautiful as a *this* or *that*. In all of its aesthetic qualities, this call-it-what-you-will owed no debt to concepts.

The fourth point is that imagination is never unbridled. As Kant argued, when the imagination is stimulated, the understanding is too, in its way. And if we think we are, as non-conceptualists sometimes suggest, disposed to regard aesthetic objects as stimuli for any fantastic association we may call up (so that a raven might be a writing desk, say), then all aesthetic bets are off. Anything can be anything. But, if non-conceptualism restricts itself to the claim that things need not be regarded as what they are *usually* taken to be, or what their standard classification makes them, then the point can bear the weight it needs to bear in the current controversy. Imagination works to see thises as thats. A cloud can be a bear, a disk of metal can be a dollar, and a sunset can be a display of colors and forms that stimulate delight, remind us of death, call up the pallet of Turner, and so on.

The fifth point is that there is nothing about either science or imagination that precludes both from cooperating in the intelligent appreciation of natural objects. As it happens, there is a pair of bald eagles nesting near my home. When I see one of them soaring over the neighborhood, I am delighted. I am aesthetically pleased. But my pleasure in the flight of this great bird does not depend very much on my recognition that, in the ornithological taxonomy, this is a bald eagle. Nor, for that matter, that it serves as a patriotic icon in our country. I see it swoop over the water, hover overhead, swinging its great white head this way and that, then sail up on a draft, and disappear into the distance. I am certainly aware that it's a bird, that it's

an eagle, and even that it is a rare bird, a bald eagle. I am also aware that, in an urban environment, it is a rare and precious presence. I know that it needs certain things to eat, certain places to rest, certain climatic conditions to survive, and so on. So, I am at least minimally aware of ornithological lore that pertains to this creature as a being of its type. I just do not believe that that knowledge contributes very much to my sense of the eagle's beauty, or the beauty of its flight. If on some occasion I were to mistake a hawk for the eagle, but see its flight as beautiful—just as beautiful as the eagle flight—I would be making a mistake in science, but not in aesthetics.

What lesson can we draw from these observations? Perhaps the most important single point is that, in thinking about the aesthetic qualities of a natural object, we cannot confine our attention to class membership or to any one category of appearance. Rather, we have to regard the object as situated in a constellation of properties, some aesthetic, some scientific, some political, and so on. And, some of these properties attach to concepts and others don't. So the best we can do in responding to them is to use those parts of our intelligent awareness that suits each. My awareness of background information about the eagle is not like the information about genre and type needed to locate a work of art in its niche and assess it, but more like information about the paint and canvas, or marble, or metal in the tuba, that are instrumental to the artistic production, yet not cognitive requisites for its appreciation. I do not want to deny that the more we know about something the better positioned we may be to appreciate it, in aesthetic or any other sense. But, at the same time, I suggest that some of what we know about a thing might help us to see it as a thing of its type without helping us to see whether, as a member of that type, it has aesthetic merit at all.

The key point science provides to the appreciation of natural beauty is the insistent vision that what is natural is more than non-human-made; it is a part of an order of being that has its own modes of growth and development, its own history, its own inter-relatedness. To see natural beauty as natural is necessarily to contextualize it in that way. But to say this is not to concede that all of the contents of nature are to be understood through particular categories or concepts, including those of science. Rather, appreciating a chicory plant, an eagle's flight, a pattern of water in sand, are reactions that always, to some degree, leave all concepts and categories behind. Paying respectful attention to the nameless ingredients that largely constitute these phenomena, we instinctively draw on a repertory of responses that we have cultivated in the full range of our experiences.

This is where art comes back into the picture. The curved line that marks the edge of a leaf may call to mind the characteristic curvilinear treatment of human limbs in mannerist painters of the Northern Renaissance (Cranach, say). But, to see the leaf and the painted limb as alike need not be to see one as the reflection, or emblem, of the other. In drawing upon our familiarity with aesthetic characteristics in the arts we are simply drawing on a resource in which the sensibilities we apply to all manner of objects have been finely honed. If I have become aware of

certain tonal modulations by listening to Handel flute sonatas, I am not turning the similar sounds I hear in the forest into ersatz flute sonatas. I am simply using the aesthetic skills I have to make the attention I pay to natural beauty pay off.

Now, suppose, having steeped myself in the study of landscape paintings in all the great museums, I step out into a setting that a landscape painter would very likely have found a fit subject for portrayal. When I look at the natural scene, do I then necessarily see it as a scene—as scenic? Because my head is full of art, do I aestheticize nature in such a way as to make it artificial? I might, but I don't see why I must. No more than a summer on a farm would make me look at bucolic paintings as especially natural. The truth of the matter is that, as Eaton has pointed out,

Human valuing is holistic; we rarely experience something purely aesthetically or purely ethically or purely religiously or purely scientifically.... The task for all of us is to develop ways of using the delight that human beings take in flights of imagination, connect it to solid cognitive understanding of what makes for sustainable environments, and thus produce the kind of attitudes and preferences that will generate the kind of care we hope for.²⁰

The curve of the leaf and the curve of the leg in the painting are both aesthetically affecting because there is something about curves of a certain kind that moves us. That something is not peculiar to nature, nor to art. It pervades experience broadly, emerging first here, then there, with a cumulative impact on the attentive observer.²¹ When we pay attention to artistic beauty, that attention prepares us to appreciate natural beauty—not as artistic, but as one more area in which we find value. And likewise for the lessons of nature for art.

VII. Conclusion

I have tried to show that appreciating nature aesthetically as natural is more than a matter of recognizing its non-artificiality; but neither is it only the comprehension of natural objects under some particular concepts and categories, nor again is it the reduction of nature to a plaything of unfettered imagination and free association. Between the view of the conceptualists, which overstates the influence of concepts and categories on appreciation, and that of non-conceptualists, which understates their influence, there is a third position, which I have called syncretism. There is a real difference between a real flower and its glass look-alike. That difference begins with the recognition that one is a product of nature. That entails seeing it as implicated in an order whose historical course and direction is complex, interconnected, and largely detached from human purposes. But this environmental recognition does not require the invocation of science in framing aesthetic awareness of the contents of nature. In reflecting on the richly various and largely nameless features we find in natural settings, we rightly draw on asso-

ciations, familiarities, analogies, etc. that we have learned in other settings, most especially in art. In drawing on these resources, we need not impose the terms of one world on the other; rather, we make the most of our developed sensibilities to make the most of nature and of the other worlds we occupy as well. And if it should turn out that there are various harmonies, similarities, and affinities between them, then all the better.

Notes

- 1 In "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 149-156 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 9], Marcia Eaton draws this distinction somewhat differently. She divides the competing positions into the "cognitive model" and the "imaginative model." My way of framing the difference is meant to suggest that, though there is cognitive content at work on both sides of the division, classifications of the kind standardly used to identify types of natural objects by the sciences are at work on one side and not on the other.
- 2 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* [1790], trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1951), pp. 141-142.
- 3 The key remark is this: "In saying it is *beautiful* and in showing that I have taste, I am concerned, not with that in which I depend on the existence of the object, but with that which I make out of this representation in myself." *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- 4 As Kant puts it, "... to take an immediate interest in the beauty of nature (not merely to have taste in judging it) is always a mark of a good soul; and that, when this interest is habitual, it at least indicates a frame of mind favorable to the moral feeling if it is voluntarily bound up with the contemplation of nature." *Ibid.*, 141.
- 5 See, for example, Marcia Muelder Eaton, "The Beauty that Requires Health," in *Placing Nature: Culture and Landscape Ecology*, ed. Joan Nassauer (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1997), pp. 85-106.
- 6 This conclusion may seem to clash with what Kant says in his famous declaration of the independence of beauty judgments from the existence of their objects (*Critique of Judgment*, p. 39), but it reflects a profound sense in which Kant subscribes to the moral instructiveness of the natural order in general.
- 7 Arthur Danto, "The Artistic Enfranchisement of Real Objects, the Artworld," *The Journal of Philosophy* 61 (1964): 571-584.
- 8 Many theorists inclined in this direction find support for their views in Kendall Walton's essay "Categories of Art," *The Philosophical Review* 79 (1970): 334-367. In this essay, Walton argues that to perceive a work of art is, typically, to perceive it in a category, and to perceive it in a category is to perceive the *Gestalt* of that category in the work. The *Gestalt* of a category is a function of what the artform has evolved to be, a basis for our expectations of perceptive awareness. So, on Walton's account, what we can comprehend in a work is always a function of what its categorial predecessors have prepared us to comprehend.

- 9 Aesthetic categories as well as explanatory principles are clearly time-relative. In an earlier age, theology and mythology occupied the position natural science does today as suppliers of conceptual tools for making natural objects intelligible.
- 10 Stolnitz develops this view in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art Criticism* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), pp. 32-42.
- 11 See Allen Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1979): 267-276 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 2]; "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment and Objectivity," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 40 (1981): 15-27; "Interactions between Art and Nature: Environmental Art," in *The Reasons of Art: Artworks and the Transformations of Philosophy*, ed. Peter McCormick (Ottawa: Ottawa University Press, 1985), pp. 222-231; "Saito on the Correct Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 20 (1986): 86-92; "Nature, Aesthetic Appreciation, and Knowledge," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53 (1995): 393-400; "Nature: Contemporary Thought," *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, Volume 3, ed. Michael Kelly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 346-349; and especially *Aesthetics and the Environment: The Appreciation of Nature, Art and Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2000). This last text draws together many of Carlson's earlier writings into a general theory of aesthetic appreciation of the environment.
- 12 Ronald Hepburn, "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty," in *British Analytical Philosophy*, eds. Bernard Williams and Alan Montefiore (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 285-310 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 1].
- 13 The tide flat is considered in Hepburn, "Neglect of Natural Beauty"; the swift and leaf examples are taken up in "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, eds. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 65-80.
- 14 Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* [1883] (New York: Penguin, 1984), pp. 94-96.
- 15 Emily Brady, "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 139-147 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 8].
- 16 Noël Carroll, "On Being Moved by Nature: Between Religion and Natural History," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, pp. 244-266 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 4].
- 17 Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), p. 37. [Editors' Note: Chapter 11 of *Aesthetics of the Environment*, "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature," is reprinted in this volume, Chapter 3.] Berleant develops the same ideas at greater length in *Living in the Landscape: Toward an Aesthetics of Environment* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1997).
- 18 Marcia Muelder Eaton presents powerful criticisms of Brady's version of non-cognitivism in "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature." She points out that the associations called up by imagination in response to natural objects are so various, so unrestricted that there is no way of knowing whether they are shallow or naïve, instructive or not, apt or delusional.
- 19 Carlson, "Nature: Contemporary Thought," p. 347.

20 Eaton, "Fact and Fiction," p. 155 [this volume, p. 179-180].

21 In a way, what I say here is reflective of Stan Godlovitch's defense of a perspective that refuses to impose one world's framework on another, but nevertheless profits from the ability of the mind trained in both to respond richly, and differently, to both. See, for example, his "Icebreakers: Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics," *The Journal of Applied Philosophy* 11 (1994): 15-30 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 5].

What the Hills Are Alive With: In Defense of the Sounds of Nature

John Andrew Fisher



If one feels protective about the word “music,” protect it and find another word for all the rest that enters through the ears.

—John Cage

I. Introduction

Reflection on the nonmusical sounds that occur around us suggests a puzzle for aesthetic theory. Many of these sounds—particularly those associated with nature—are quite beautiful if we listen to them attentively. Many are interesting, singly or (especially) in combination. Certainly there is as much richness and complexity in the sounds around us as occurs in music. Some move us emotionally.¹ Many are irritating or tedious. Our responses to nonmusical sounds of all types are thus often (perhaps most often) aesthetic. Oddly, in spite of the *prima facie* aesthetic value of many of these sounds, particularly the sounds of nature, aesthetic theory has largely overlooked them. Those interested in the aesthetics of nature have done the same. They have approached nature almost exclusively through vision and the visual arts.² This neglect by theory of the sounds around us is in striking contrast to the attention that theory pays to music. For, within aesthetic theory and within the arts, music is regarded as a major art form. For many people it is the supreme art. For most it is the most influential and widely experienced art medium.

Yet, is it really true, as the existence of this contrast suggests, that sounds are worthy of serious (aesthetic) attention only when intentionally manipulated? And are they of marginal importance even in an account of the aesthetics of nature? I take it that reflection, particularly on the often beautiful and intriguing sounds of nature, implies that the answers to these questions must be: no, and no.³ I assume, in short, the *prima facie* plausibility of the claim that the sounds of nature are worthy of aesthetic attention and that they contribute to the aesthetic value of nature. Why then do we tend to ignore them when we theorize about nature? In this essay I explore what I take to be the most significant impediments to including sound in

accounts of the aesthetics of nature. There may be those who think that sounds that are nonmusical do not merit attention. Others may think that sounds are not important features of nature. Still others might reason that the characteristics of aesthetic appreciation in general are such as to exclude our auditory responses to nature sounds from the realm of proper aesthetic appreciation. In what follows I try to show that the reasoning underlying each of these concerns can be disarmed. Although many of the points that I develop apply to nonmusical sounds in general, those sounds that we appear to value the most and that are relevant to an aesthetics of nature are those sounds produced in and by nature.

What emerges in the argument is that our appreciation of the sounds of nature does not conform to the appreciation of music or to the strictures of conventional aesthetic theory, as these have been extended by various thinkers from their application to the arts to appreciation of nature.⁴ If this is right, one moral to draw is that it is a mistake to assume that the aesthetics of nature must parallel the aesthetics of art.

II. Soundscapes and Soundscape Events

Sound is a huge and relatively unexplored subject. Because of this, several initial questions and distinctions must be addressed. The first and most fundamental concerns what sort of object of appreciation is most appropriate for the exploration of the sounds of nature. To understand one plausible object of aural aesthetic attention we must turn to the notion of a “soundscape,” a term coined in the 1970s by R. Murray Schafer to refer to “the sonic environment.”⁵ A soundscape contains all the sounds within a given environment—whether that environment is human-made, natural, or mixed—as they occur spatially and temporally. Thus, we can speak of the soundscape of St. Peter’s square, Niagara Falls, or the inside of a gambling casino.⁶ By contrast, a different object of aural attention would be the sounds of individual *kinds* of things considered in themselves: birds, crickets, tractors, wind, fireworks, waterfalls. My proposal is that the type of object appropriate to an aesthetics of nature is the set of sounds occurring in a soundscape.

One reason to make sounds as they occur in soundscapes primary involves the idea that the aesthetics of nature is at bottom about what and how we experience nature. Aesthetic theory applied to most of the arts attempts to understand what we see and hear.⁷ By contrast, discussions of the aesthetic value of nature and wilderness often work on an abstract level several steps removed from sensory experience. An example would be concern for the *balance* and *harmony* of an ecosystem. Now, clearly, the sounds of a bird or a frog, for example, contribute greatly to the soundscape of a particular environment. What I propose to set aside is aesthetic attention directed to a bird or frog song type *abstracted* from any particular environment in which it may occur. I do so because directing attention in that direction would be to ignore how nature actually sounds, how that bird song sounds in any of its actual instances.⁸ When we hear any actual tokens of the sounds of animals

or natural features of the landscape, we hear them as part of the overall ensemble of sounds in a soundscape.⁹ And our aesthetic pleasure or displeasure in nonmusical sounds comes from sounds as actually heard, including background sounds.

There is another reason for focusing on soundscapes rather than on sounds of kinds of things. Many of the sounds of nature—for example, the sounds of oceans or rivers or the forest canopy or weather events—vary significantly from place to place, from time to time, and with each instance. What is the sound of the wind, for example? It all depends on what it is blowing. What waves sound like hitting the shore depends on the weather as well as on the structure and texture of the coast against which they are moving. This points not only to the variability and causal complexity of nature sounds but also to a difficulty for any attempt to fully account for the sounds of nature by thinking of a catalogue of the sounds of individual kinds of things. For the examples just mentioned raise the further problem about how to individuate the sounds of nature by their causes. At the shore is one hearing the sound of water against rocks? Or is it the waves that one is hearing? The wind? The tide coming in? Wind *and* waves, or what? That each answer may be equally right indicates that it is the particularity of the sound ensemble that we must focus on.

Soundscapes also change over time. They change perhaps even more significantly than do landscapes. Whereas a landscape's visual appearance may be merely enhanced at dawn and dusk, natural soundscapes change dramatically as various species of birds, insects, and other animals (as well as weather events) either make sounds or cease to make them. Birds, although beautiful in themselves close-up, do not significantly affect the visual appearance of a landscape, whereas the daily cycle of their sounds have a powerful effect on the soundscape. (This is even more true of insects, such as crickets and cicadas, that we seldom see. Their stridulations create a rich blanket keynote for many soundscapes.) Both landscapes and natural soundscapes change significantly by season as well.

For these reasons, it is natural to begin to speak of the soundscape, defined as it is by the boundaries of a particular physical environment, as the containing space of sounds. Accordingly, the soundscape is then regarded as the repository of soundscape events, which as objects of attention can be any set of sounds to be heard together in the soundscape over some given period of time.¹⁰ These could include either the total set of sounds or various subsets of sounds to be heard over a given period of time.

Discussions of soundscapes often focus on the typical sounds one hears in a certain specified environment. If we think of the sounds made by inherent elements of a given environment, we might not include transitory sounds that are not ascribable to the underlying landscape, sounds such as human voices or jet planes going overhead, although they are certainly part of particular soundscape events. Of course, it is difficult to define precisely what counts and what does not. Part of the soundscape of St. Peter's Square in Rome includes the sounds of traffic from just in front of it, just as part of the soundscape in certain wilderness areas inevitably

includes the sounds from nearby highways. We should note as well that typical events need not be frequent; they can be very rare. Let me give an anecdotal example. One hot sunny summer afternoon in a meadow I heard a strange rhythmical cracking, crackling sound, a bit like a fire starting, or big heavy rain drops hitting dry vegetation with the rhythm of popcorn just beginning to pop. It was in fact dry pea pods on the wild sweet pea plants that covered the hillside. Heated by the sun, they were popping open in slow concert, with a crack every three or four seconds.

III. On Disregarding the Sounds around Us

The neglect of nature sounds in aesthetic theorizing in part reflects the fact that modern urban dwellers often ignore or suppress awareness of many of the sounds around them. It is not only possible, but no doubt common, to go on a hike through woods, along a stream, climb above the tree line to a mountain pass, and come back down without ever once consciously noticing any of the sounds one has heard, such as the stream, a waterfall, the birds and animals, the wind, the sound of one's steps on logs, snow, or rocks. We hear and react to sounds in nature without being conscious that we are hearing what we are hearing. In this section I argue that this behavior toward the sounds around us is not best explained by claiming that in fact nature sounds lack aesthetic value.

Our inattentive behavior toward environmental sound may be quite useful in urban settings. On the one hand, we need to ignore sounds that would mask speech and hence information flow. On the other hand, many industrial sounds impinge on the edges of discomfort in frequency and intensity. Thus many people have developed the psychological capacity to ignore sound to a high degree. We often pay attention to environmental sounds only when they significantly interfere with such activities as talking or listening to music. But surely this is largely learned behavior. It is behavior that has to be unlearned to become an effective bird watcher, for instance.¹¹ Rural people of times past surely did not go into nature paying no conscious attention to the sounds.

Nor do many people in other cultures. For example, the Kaluli of New Guinea not only listen to the sounds of nature very alertly and responsively, but they also model their music on the sounds of nature, and they model their way of listening to music on the way that they listen to nature sounds.¹² Steven Feld has described some of the sounds that the Kaluli listen to in the tropical rain forest where they live:

What we were both hearing [in the morning] were sounds of mists, winds, waterways, insects, birds, pigs, dogs, all located in diffuse but auditorially present space.... At the village edge, dusk brings sounds of birds, insects, people, animals, and drizzling drops after a typical late afternoon rain. In the late night or early morning hours, crickets, mists, and frogs are more sensually present.¹³

Feld speaks of the “deeply pleasurable aspect to the way the Kaluli approach the forest, which couples a sentimentality based on land as mediator of identity and an outright enjoyment of the soundscape. The Kaluli find the forest good to listen to, and good to sing with as well.”¹⁴ The responsive attention of the Kaluli to the soundscape indicates, if we doubted it, that there is a basic human capacity to discriminate subtly among, and respond strongly to environmental sounds.

Our habit of ignoring sounds thus has a natural explanation that does not require us to conclude that there are not aesthetically rich soundscape events in our environments to hear, nor that we do not value many of these events when in a receptive frame of mind. When people pay attention to them, the sounds of a visually beautiful meadow, for instance, are obviously an important and desirable part of experience of the meadow: the birds, the wind, the insects, the grass swishing and crinkling under foot. Even in our society it is important to hear certain sounds, although it is not equally important to notice that one is hearing those sounds.

Sounds also play a role in our conception of wilderness. The definition of wilderness in the United States federal Wilderness Act of 1964 includes as a requirement for a potential wilderness area that it have “outstanding opportunities for solitude.” Part of the notion of solitude is that one can escape from the sounds of modern civilization.¹⁵ We might think that the desire for solitude is simply the desire for the absence of sound, but that is not plausible. For one thing, we are never in fact surrounded by a total absence of sound; something is always making sounds. What one can find in nature is often “silence” of a special sort. Negatively, this silence is the absence of *human-made* sounds, but positively this silence comprises a background of low-level sounds that provide a sonic carpet on which other sounds of nature appear to great effect. That “silence” can be a resonant chorus of insects in the evening. It can be the soft splash of waves against which one bird sings a striking song in the middle of the night. The absence of human-made sounds enables us to hear with pleasure the sound events that occur in a natural soundscape.

IV. Nonmusic and Music

I have noted that many of us disregard the sounds around us, even when they would be rewarding to listen to. It might seem that there is a conceptual justification for ignoring nonmusical sounds. This resides in the tendency to think of music as resisting and opposing all other sounds. In our society, we learn that among sounds it is music that has the value and merits attention. Nonmusical sounds are noises that get in the way of music. Robin Maconie expresses this thought when he says that “for most listeners what distinguishes music from other sound or noise is that it is pleasing to listen to,” and he adds, “the converse of music is noise.”¹⁶ The thought seems to be that the only sounds that are pleasurable occur in music.

There is confusion in such an idea. Just because nonmusical sounds are not intentionally produced to be pleasing to listen to, it does not follow that they are

not pleasing to listen to. Schafer has formulated a plausible explanation of how such an attitude came about. His thesis is that our present (Western) concept of music developed with our transition to indoor living: “With indoor living, two things developed antonymously [*sic*]: the high art of music and noise pollution—for noises were the sounds that were kept outside.”¹⁷ The resulting concept of music that we have developed is characterized by “its abstraction from daily life, its exclusivity. Music has become an activity which requires silence for its proper presentation—containers of silence called music rooms.”¹⁸ We might put the psychological inference this way: because other sounds interfere with music, either potentially or actually, and musical sounds have value, other sounds must have negative value. If music gives us aural pleasure, environmental sounds must only interfere with aural pleasure.

Schafer’s history reminds us that in our culture we are sometimes explicitly taught, and in any case habituated by our musical practices, to regard nonmusical sounds as a potential hindrance and intrinsically inferior to musical sounds. As Maconie says: “Environmental sounds are a part of life, but not normally part of our musical experience. We pay little deliberate attention to them, or, more accurately, we try not to notice them.”¹⁹ This attitude toward nonmusical sound does not stand up to much scrutiny: when we are not thinking of the contrast with music, other sounds are often regarded as pleasurable.

V. The Sound of the Land

Let me briefly turn to a different source of reluctance to taking nature sounds seriously. Those who take seriously the aesthetics of nature obviously do not believe that something must be intentionally produced to be aesthetically appreciated. Nonetheless, from the environmentalist point of view, sounds may seem to be too slight and ephemeral to characterize units of environmental concern. Accordingly, sound cannot contribute to an aesthetics of nature capable of supporting preservation of nature. The objects of environmentalist aesthetics,²⁰ it might be urged, should be large units of land, such as a mountain range, a swamp, a coast, a river, a plateau, in general, an ecosystem. It might be argued that it makes no sense to talk about the sounds of these things—for example, the sound of the Grand Canyon—any more than we can speak of the sound of a painting.

This concern may be predicated on an implicit analogy between the land and visual artworks. But even accepting the analogy does not rule out sound as an important feature. To be sure, *usually* we do not ascribe sounds to visual works, but we can do so if they are intentionally made to include sound, as in sound sculptures.²¹ Moreover, gardens are units of land deliberately arranged to produce and include various sounds as part of their design (fountains in European gardens, sounding objects in Japanese gardens). So there is no conceptual impropriety in ascribing sounds to an object or a unit of land and regarding the sounds as an important feature of the object or unit of land.

It may seem odd to attribute particular sounds to the larger ecosystem, but that is because they are sounds to be attributed to a part, the particular soundscape, of the whole. The sound events are (say) of the soundscape of a valley, not of the whole mountain range. Nevertheless, the value of the sound events ought to accrue to the whole just as the visual beauty of the valley redounds to that of the whole mountain range.

It is true that soundscapes are changeable, sound events ephemeral. But this does not rule them out as occurring in, and as ascribable to, environments. If it did, it would also rule out much of the visual appearance of the land, as this too changes daily and seasonally. An environmentally significant unit of land will have many soundscapes and these soundscapes will be continually changing. Insofar as the sound events in the soundscapes, although unique, are aesthetically valuable, so to that extent will be the land.

VI. A Requirement of Aesthetic Appreciation: Objectivity

I now turn to the most significant set of problems for appreciation of nature sounds. These center on the idea that acts of true aesthetic appreciation must be governed by conventions of objectivity. To illustrate this idea I focus on Allen Carlson's early and influential articles on the appreciation of nature. These articles posit that appreciation of nature should be expressed in aesthetic judgments and that aesthetic judgments need to be objective. Carlson proposes, contrary to some previous opinion, that aesthetic judgments of nature are objective just as are aesthetic judgments of art. He starts by noting that some of them are objectively true (e.g., "the Grand Tetons are majestic") and some objectively false ("the Grand Tetons are dumpy"). He argues that to explain this fact we must suppose that appreciation needs to be guided by the character of the nature being appreciated. This implies that something must play the role in regard to nature that artistic categories play in regard to art, that of making aesthetic judgments of artworks true or false, as, for instance, the fact that *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* is a proto-cubist painting makes the judgment "*Les Demoiselles* is awkward" mistaken.

Since we believe that nature is most adequately described by natural science, *correct appreciation* of nature, that is, appreciation applying the correct categories to its object, appears to require the guidance of scientific knowledge. As Noël Carroll puts it: "for epistemological reasons, we are driven to the view of nature appreciation as a species of natural history." He adds: "any competing picture of nature appreciation, if it is to be taken seriously, must have a comparable means ... for solving the problem of the objectivity of nature appreciation."²² Moreover, objectivity is clearly desirable from the environmental perspective. Janna Thompson argues that aesthetic judgments of nature must be objective if they are to support preservationist claims about the noninstrumental value of nature: "A judgment of value that is merely personal and subjective gives us no way of arguing that everyone ought to learn to appreciate something, or at least regard it as worthy of preservation."²³

The insistence that aesthetic responses to nature produce objective judgments, however, poses a problem for anyone wishing to take the aesthetics of nature sounds seriously. One reason is simply the familiar fact that people differ greatly in their responses to sounds. I may find the “coo coo” sounds of a flock of doves to be extremely harmonious and to express a soothing calm. A friend may find the same sound insistently obtrusive.²⁴ As I argue below, there are other even weightier reasons to doubt that appreciation of the sounds of nature measures up to the requirements of objectivity. Because of this, I propose to re-examine the necessity of aesthetic objectivity. I especially resist the claim suggested in Carlson’s writing that to be aesthetic a response has to be modeled on objective judgments of art.²⁵

The demand that aesthetic appreciation be objective in fact comprises two distinguishable requirements, one of which is more clearly plausible than the other. The first is the notion that our responses and judgments ought to be guided by the object of appreciation, by its actual characteristics. Call this the *guidance-by-object requirement*. This requirement is unexceptionable and a condition of any aesthetic appreciation of any sort of object. The second is the notion that our aesthetic judgments, like our epistemological judgments, should be potentially universal. In Kantian terms, when we make such a judgment we can rightly demand that others ought to agree with it if they are appropriately placed perceivers. Call this the *agreement requirement*. Of these two requirements, it is usually the second and more debatable requirement that writers have explicitly in mind when they discuss objectivity.²⁶ Sometimes these two requirements are not clearly distinguished, perhaps on the assumption that agreement follows from guidance by the object.

But they are logically distinct. This is clear if our aesthetic response is *underdetermined* by the characteristics of the object of appreciation. This, it should be clear, is exactly the case in many acts of aesthetic appreciation of both art and nature. Perhaps “The Tetons are majestic” qualifies as a universal judgment (or nearly enough), but it is also and not coincidentally remarkably clichéd. Rather than a sensitive response to fresh perceptions, this judgment seems to be a paradigmatic assertion of the sort that teaches us what “majestic” means. Most non-stereotypical aesthetic responses are not going to be so obvious.

Even in the arts it is notorious that critical judgments are generally disputable. Even though such judgments are *guided* by the artwork, they are significantly underdetermined by that object. This does not mean that *any* critical or interpretive judgment is properly assertable, but it does mean that even in the arts, we can have judgments that are both aesthetic and not universal. What this shows is that although the agreement requirement may specify a desirable property of some aesthetic judgments, it does not specify a necessary condition for acts of appreciation to be aesthetic.

If our appreciation of nature is unstructured or if there is more than one way to structure it (as I argue is the case for sounds), then the agreement requirement may fail to be satisfied in that case. Fortunately, there are plausible conceptions of the

aesthetic that do not make agreement a logical requirement of an aesthetic judgment.

No thinker in recent decades did as much to elucidate the aesthetic point of view as Monroe Beardsley. Yet, consider his conception of aesthetic gratification:

Gratification is aesthetic when it is obtained primarily from attention to the formal unity and/or regional qualities of a complex whole, and when its magnitude is a function of the degree of formal unity and/or the intensity of regional quality.²⁷

We do not need to accept this definition fully to note that it leaves open the question whether there is a common, much less universal, response of gratification to a given complex whole. Different acts of attention to the perceptual qualities of the same complex whole could easily lead to different sorts of gratification—or none at all—and yet all be aesthetic by this definition.²⁸

VII. Framing

Having seen the limitations of the agreement requirement, we are now in a position to examine the application of the guidance requirement. Even though when we hear nature sounds we are surely guided by sounds to be heard in the environment, our acts of appreciation are far more radically underdetermined than they are when we listen to music. Or so I argue in this section and the next.

Because nature does not provide an intentional object of appreciation the way musicians do, there is a serious framing problem concerning the sounds of nature: which sounds do I pay attention to and for how long? We have extensive and complicated conventions for appreciating music, anchored by a conception of music as produced in integrated whole units by the intentional activities of composers and performers. We have clear boundaries around the musical units that exclude ambient and environmental sounds. Such boundaries exclude what is “noise” relative to music. Do we also have boundaries conventionally regimenting the “noise” into certain sound event packages? It sounds fantastic to claim that we do.

Framing is a more significant problem for sounds than for sights. A visual sight includes all the discernible features within an intuitive geometric frame. (Perhaps we find this natural because we have a tradition of representational visual art—for example, landscape painting—that reinforces conventional notions of a “natural” frame.) However, because sound has the property of coming from all directions at once (filling up the auditory spectrum) and is not blocked by visually opaque materials such as walls and trees, we have developed a corresponding ability to select the sounds to which we attend. Suppose you are sitting in a hot tub in a city in the Arizona desert listening to the sounds around you. Do you just listen to the Western Warblers and the wind in the fruit and palm trees or do you (should you) also notice the sounds of the hot tub jets and the popping bubbles making a pleas-

ant hissing on the water? Do you add or ignore the sounds of ventilator fans spinning hot air from attics and occasional jet planes overhead? At Niagara Falls do I strain to hear birds in the forest over the constant roar of the water? In the Tuscan countryside do I ignore the high pitched whining of mosquitoes? Shall I just focus on the loons from across the lake in Minnesota or shall I strain to hear others from more distant parts, and do they go together with the chattering of squirrels and the buzzing of flies? One can, of course, propose principles of framing, but I do not see how they could fail to be partially arbitrary, even if they seem natural in one respect or another. Nature does not dictate an *intrinsically* correct way to frame its sounds in the way that a composer does. We can listen to the total ensemble of sounds or focus on some subset of the sounds, and I do not see how the nature of the sounds we are listening to dictates that one way of framing is more correct than another.²⁹ Even what is foreground and what background in environmental listening is somewhat a function of the nature of the listener's attention. For example, I can focus on "s" sounds in a conversation. I can notice the two or three quiet pings that a florescent light makes when it is turned on. I can concentrate on the musical pitch of a ping-pong ball when it is hit.³⁰ In all these cases, something becomes prominent in my auditory experience that would ordinarily not be noticed even if I was consciously listening to the same overall sound event.

From this perspective, recordings of nature are misleading. Although my argument implies that such recordings are worthy of aesthetic attention, they certainly differ from hearing actual soundscapes. For they give us one take, one set of balances, excluding much and focusing on selected sounds, much as a photograph frames and organizes a scene visually in a very specific way. I cannot imagine how one could argue that it would be either right or wrong to hear (say) drops of water falling from a roof after a rain as having a rhythm or even as having a rhythm that relates to the songs of a nearby bird. But while most of us would ignore or altogether miss hearing particular drops that way, a sound recordist might highlight and relate them to the sound of birds or distant traffic in just such a way.³¹

A further problem for sounds is *temporal* framing. When do significant sound events begin and when do they end? How many separate events can go on at the same time? Several bands can play different musical works at the same time. Can nature do the same? Are there significant sub-units, measures that determine a meter, as it were? How long *is* the sound event in nature; how long does the relevant whole last? Musical works with significant structural relations can run from a few minutes (Webern) to hours (Wagner). As performances of musical works develop in time, structural relations and patterns emerge. Something as simple as the repetition of a theme takes time. In nature, are themes being repeated, perhaps in something like different keys or perhaps in altered guises? How long shall we listen for a repetition and what should we hear as a repetition? Consider an example: I am sitting on a rural hillside and the wind is blowing very hard and noisily through the bushes and trees. Suddenly the wind stops and there is a surprising and powerful silence. Then one frog begins to sound, followed by one bird. This inter-

lude lasts for thirty seconds at the most. Then other birds and crickets join in until there is a crescendo of sound to which the wind finally adds an overwhelming whooshing and bustling as it picks up again and drowns out the other sounds. This interlude strikes me as a lovely sonic moment, and my framing of it was no doubt natural. But it was entirely dependent on (Western) musical analogies. Even though it was “natural,” this is not the same as universal, nor is it the same as a frame that is dictated by the intrinsic nature of the sound events themselves. Much of the effect of the moment of relative silence was created by the effect of the long period of loud wind sounds that preceded it. But how long a period was the *correct* period to pay attention to the preceding sounds in order to determine the quality of the moment of quiet? Would ten seconds of noisy wind be adequate? And why is my thirty-second interval of relative quiet an appropriate length for significant aesthetic appreciation? I see no way to raise the status of my framing to that required to make my judgments objective without claiming that we have conventions—not just typical or understandable responses—for listening to the sounds of nature. And to claim that we have such conventions, in my opinion, would not be a plausible claim about the acts of listening to nature in our society.³²

There is a further reason to doubt that we have conventions for objective framing of sound events: the uniqueness of natural sound events. Nothing could be more conceptually central to music than the repeatability of musical works. Sound events that are performances of the same musical piece are in large measure duplicates of each other, and conventionally so regarded. And the capacity of musical works both to exist over time and to receive aesthetic appraisals—even to receive conflicting appraisals—depends on the repeatability of the works, that is, on the idea that multiple performances are performances of the same work. By contrast, ensemble sound events in nature are largely unique; ensemble sound events are not instances of a sonic object abstractable from this or that soundscape and to that extent repeatable. This is so especially of sound events that contain any human influence (for example, whether a plane flies over or a distant train whistle sounds), but it is true even for purely “natural” sound events because of the variability of weather and season and the complexity of particular events. (Indeed, it is plausible to hold that a certain amount of aesthetic value and pleasure derives from the very nonrepeatability of the sound events we hear in nature.)

This fact makes it implausible to claim that we have significant constraining conventions about how to frame sound events in soundscapes. To be sure, there are conventions of a sort for the sounds of individual types of things that give them approximate boundaries. Striking examples of human-made sounds that are now becoming only vivid memories are given by Murray Schafer: “milk bottles, steam whistles, bicycle bells, horseshoes being tossed against a metal spike.”³³ Perhaps we have a common agreement about the character and boundaries of these sounds, as indeed we do about animal sounds. There are natural enough boundaries framing bird songs and bull elk bugling, but beyond that there are not similar conventions about how to frame the sound events that include this bird singing to another.

er bird on this hill in this weather on this morning or about how to frame the sounds of all the bull elk in this mountain meadow with this forage in this weather and so on.³⁴ Given the unique quality of natural soundscape events generally, it is doubtful that we could establish conventions about how to frame such sound events, even if we wanted to.

It does not follow that aesthetic response to, and appraisal of, unique and ephemeral sound events is impossible. We have, after all, the example of musical improvisation. But an important fact about musical improvisation and our appreciation of it is that it is practiced against a background of extensive musical conventions about how to frame the sounds we hear; improvised music is still to be listened to as music. I have argued that there is no similar set of constraining conventions for ensemble sound events in nature. And so response to, and appraisal of, nature sounds will be that much more underdetermined than response to, and appraisal of, improvised music.

VIII. Ways of Listening

I have described a number of reasons why the appreciation of sound events in nature is not governed by the conventions governing appreciation of music that organize groupings of sounds into salient wholes. But could we not relativize our acts of listening to a particular physical location, a particular sound event, and a particular framing of sounds? In that case, even though the framing is partially arbitrary, and even though the event is essentially unique and ephemeral, could we not then ask whether in principle anyone who has the requisite auditory apparatus and had been in the same situation and had devoted the same attention to the soundscape would have agreed about how it sounded?

It is not clear that this pale imitation of the agreement requirement would provide what we need for the purposes of aesthetic appraisal. How could we ever establish that there *would be* agreement with particular acts of appreciation of unique sound events? It would be hard to prove that this relativized objectivity was not a property of almost any response to unique events of nature. There is reason to doubt, in any case, that we can insist on even this weak and relativized notion of agreement for acts of appreciation of nature sounds. This is because there are no grounds, as far as I can see, for ruling out a plurality of *ways of listening* to the sounds.

Murray Schafer suggests that “certain ears”—here he is thinking of different cultures—“are trained to listen to sounds peripherally—that is, equally from all directions—while others are trained to place sounds in series which are proportionate to one another, the strong to the weak, the desired to the undesired.”³⁵ He bases this suggestion on the different ways that musics are structured: “We know that different cultures listen differently—the predilection for sound combinations in different musics hints at this.”³⁶ Return to the hillside I mentioned earlier and consider a mixed set of soundscape events. I look out over many hills covered with

groves of olive trees and fields of wheat rising to their crests. The wind is now calm and for quite a while I have been hearing some sort of machine slowly struggling on a distant hill. At the same time there is a rich and complex chorus comprising several species of birds singing continually. Eventually I realize that the distant machine is a tractor patiently plowing up and down the slope of a hill. I start to hear the tractor, with its baritone frequency range and its repeated sound pattern, as like a ground bass to the other sounds. Then there is another tractor, and now there are two related bass lines. I listen to the birds, finally, as an excitable chorus of soprano voices on top, much as in some pieces of music by Charles Ives and Elliot Carter. I do not pretend that this is composed music; rather I hear these sounds as related together and somewhat as formalists claim to hear music, that is, without emotional expression or ideational content.³⁷

Now, it might be hard to hear the sounds this way, but I think I could maintain this with training. The question is: would it be incorrect or unaesthetic to hear the sound this way? I do not see how it could be.

There are other possibilities: associational and/or representational listening. Schafer explains how pieces of metal are arranged in the tea kettle of the Japanese Tea Master so that when the water boils, in the words of Kakuzo, "one may hear the echoes of a cataract muffled by clouds, of a distant sea breaking among the rocks, a rainstorm sweeping through a bamboo forest, or the sighing of pines on some faraway hill." This fanciful way of listening to these sounds corresponds to the Japanese word for music, *ongaku*, which Schafer insists "means the enjoyment of sounds; it is an inclusive rather than an exclusive concept."³⁸ Thus in *Ko wo kiku*, "listening to the incense," each piece of burning incense is both smelled and listened to. This reminds us of how much a fire or a bubbling brook sounds like many other things. And so this way of hearing could easily be extended to nonintentionally produced sounds. If it were, it too would not appear to be inappropriate.

More generally, Schafer sums up several possible ways of listening:

In the external soundscape the ear is always wavering between choices.... We are always at the center of the soundscape, listening out in all directions simultaneously. We know that in Indian music one does not concentrate on the melodies but rather on the drone in order to hear the melodies and embellishments as though through a veil. One has the impression that in traditional Japanese music, while the drone is absent, a similar process is encouraged.... Its events are often layered so that several kinds of material may be presented simultaneously and independently.... There seems to be no particular hierarchy in such music, no domination, no focus.³⁹

Trained to listen to such music, I might find it natural to listen to sound events in nature in the same way.

This is clearly illustrated by the Kaluli way of listening, which is notable in

being equally applicable to the sounds of nature or culture. This is no accident, since the Kaluli hear them as unified. The Kaluli term that describes both their musical style and their way of listening is *dulugu ganalan*, which Feld translates as “lift-up-over sounding.” This spatial-acoustic metaphor is explicated by Feld this way:

Parts, sounds, whether few or many, must constantly “lift-up-over” one another; one cannot speak of sounds “leading” or “following” or “starting” or “finishing.” Human sound making must stagger in layers, like bird calls, or arch up and over, like waterfalls.... Kaluli like all sounds to be dense, compacted, without breaks or pauses.⁴⁰

This style of sound preferences, as Feld calls it, is modeled on the sounds of the forest:

In the forest, sounds constantly shift figure and ground; examples of continually staggered alternations and overlaps, at times sounding completely interlocked and seamless, are abundant. For Kaluli, this is the naturally coherent organizing model for soundmaking, whether human, animal, or environmental: a constant textural densification constructed from “lift-up-over sounds.”⁴¹

Lift-up-over sounding, accordingly, applies to sound relations of all sorts: within the sounds of one instrument; and between this instrument and surrounding sounds; or between voice sounds, song, and talk; or voice sounds and work tools; or finally, simply to sounds of nature.

Evidently the Kaluli aesthetic fits the sounds of nature very well. What could rule out the Kaluli way as an inappropriate way to appreciate these sounds? Surely we must conclude that the complexity of environmental sounds as well as the complexity of our ways of hearing combine to make it probable that there are multiple ways to listen to the sounds around us.

Talk about ways of listening to sounds can be reformulated in terms of attribution of different sound structures and relations to the sound events around us. Some of these relations, as we have seen, may even involve listening through metaphors and analogies. Nicholas Cook argues that such listening is even true of music. He holds that analytical theories of music do not describe the music as it might be heard neutrally or objectively:

Analytical methods as distinct from each other as Schenker’s, semiotics, and set theory share as their common aim the demonstration of the manner in which musical elements combine with one another to form integrated compositional structures. In this book I argue that the structural wholeness of musical works should be seen as a metaphorical construction, rather than as directly corresponding to anything that is real in a perceptual sense.⁴²

Cook finds support in Roger Scruton's views of the role of imagination in creating a critical account of an artwork. Scruton claims that "much of music criticism consists of the deliberate construction of an intentional object from the infinitely ambiguous instructions implicit in a sequence of sounds."⁴³

As ambiguous as musical sounds may be, a sequence of sounds in nature is many times more ambiguous. The ambiguity in either case raises the question of the reality of the relations and metaphors the listener ascribes to the heard sounds. Here it seems to me there is another difference between music and nature (or more broadly, environmental) sounds. In the case of music, a tradition of pedagogy, theory, and intention—what Cook calls "musical culture"—can justify critical and theoretical ascriptions of complex structures and relations to musical sound events, for instance, that a sequence of sounds exhibits the return of a theme in a highly modified form. By contrast the sounds of nature are neither composed nor performed, nor notated, studied, or taught. In our society, at any rate, there is no "nature sound culture," no set of conventions, unambiguously ascribing a significant set of relations to the sounds of nature. Whether our hearing is guided by representational associations or baroque musical analogies or Kaluli relations of dense, shifting, overlapping layers of sound, if the relations can be imaginatively heard by an appropriately programmed listener who is attending to sound events that are in the soundscape, then the relations are justified. There is a large multiplicity of structures and relations that we might hear, and all seem equally legitimate.

We can, however, grant that our appreciation ought to be constrained to this extent, that it would be wrong to hear nature sounds in *just* the same way as we hear music. For, music, as we conceive of it in our society, is an intentional activity of musicians (composers and performers) who produce a sound object to be appreciated, and our conception of this intended object controls how we listen to music and what counts as appropriate appreciation.⁴⁴ But the truth about nature, most of us believe, is that it is not intentional; neither the sound of the waterfall nor the combination of the sound of the waterfall, the birds singing, and the wind blowing through the aspen trees is deliberately produced to be heard as sound events. To the extent that we listen to music as symbolic of ideas or expressive of emotions, for example, and on the assumption that these require the sounds to be intentionally generated, it would be incorrect to listen to the sounds of nature as if they were literally produced to symbolize ideas or express emotions.

IX. Conclusion

I conclude that appreciation of the sounds of nature is an appropriate part of the aesthetics of nature, even though it does not conform to the patterns that have been established for appreciating music or artworks in general. Aesthetic judgments of soundscapes and sound events, for the reasons that have been given in sections VI and VII, will be many times more underdetermined than are typical judgments of

art or musical works. There are few constraints on appreciation of such sounds, even granting that we require appreciation to respond to the sounds that are there to be heard.

There could be little that on the surface is more disquieting to aesthetic theory than such freedom. It may appear to make responsible criticism and discourse about the objects of appreciation impossible. But we can see from our ability to discuss nature sounds that it does not have such devastating effects.⁴⁵ The person who listens to nature is simply free of the criteria that govern appreciation of music and that function to rule out many possible ways of listening to musical soundscapes. Given that nature is filled with sounds, our freedom of appreciation of these sounds simply yields an even greater abundance to listen to.

If seriously attending to nature's sounds requires giving up much of the universality that we normally expect of aesthetic appreciation, this is balanced by the enlivening effect that our subjective freedom can have on our auditory imaginations. Nature's sounds thus merit serious aesthetic attention both theoretically and experientially.⁴⁶

Notes

- 1 Noël Carroll describes this sort of experience: "we may find ourselves under a *thundering* waterfall and be excited by its grandeur; or standing barefoot amidst a *silent* arbor, softly carpeted with layers of decaying leaves, a sense of repose and homeyness may be aroused in us." "On Being Moved by Nature: Between Religion and Natural History," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, eds. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 4] p. 245, emphasis added [this volume, p. 90].
- 2 The recent anthology of twelve articles on natural beauty and landscape edited by Kemal and Gaskell, *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, does not even mention sound in its index.
- 3 Besides the overwhelming evidence that human beings arrange their lives so as to control sound and so as to seek out pleasing sounds, further evidence for "no" answers here comes from the burgeoning popularity of environmental recordings. This is not necessarily evidence that we value and listen to sounds of nature in the *same* way as we do to musical sounds, but it is some evidence that we value the sounds of nature and that they engage our aesthetic attention.
- 4 Most notably by Allen Carlson in a series of papers. Of special note for my purposes are his "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1979): 267-276 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 2]; "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment, and Objectivity," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 40 (1981): 15-27; and "On Appreciating Agricultural Landscapes," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43 (1985): 301-312.
- 5 R. Murray Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1977), p. 274.

Also see R. Murray Schafer, "Music, Non-Music and the Soundscape," and Barry Truax, "Electroacoustic Music and the Soundscape: The Inner and Outer World," both in *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought: Volume I*, eds. John Paynter, Tim Howell, Richard Orton, and Peter Seymour (London: Routledge, 1992).

- 6 I deal throughout with mixed soundscapes because they are by far the most common and familiar. Only in distant wilderness or inside modern buildings do we enter soundscapes that consist solely of nature or human-made sounds. Sounds of nature occur both in pure wilderness and in mixed soundscapes (street, garden, park). Although my interest is especially in illuminating the appreciation of nature sounds, many points that apply to the appreciation of pure nature soundscapes apply to soundscapes in general and are easier to make with more familiar examples from mixed soundscapes. I should also add that it would be a mistake to make a sharp distinction between nature and human-made sounds—consider, for instance: the flapping of sails, the splashing of paddle wheels, the sound of a bonfire, the sound of a baby crying.
- 7 Carlson, in "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," implicitly accepts the criterion of faithfulness to experience when he criticizes the so-called landscape model of appreciation of nature. Carlson criticizes the model for not putting us *into* the environment.
- 8 Malcolm Budd, in "The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 36 (1996): 209, asks: "Is aesthetic appreciation of nature confined to individuals (and individuals as related to each other) or does it extend to kinds?" But he fails to note the significantly different accounts we would get depending on which we choose as primary. Even if we can form some conception of the visual appearance of the bald eagle in itself or the song of the western warbler in itself, the experience of *these* kinds of things becomes at best only indirectly related to actual visual or listening experiences.
- 9 Contrast bird song recordings made as teaching aids, with ambient sounds edited out, with recordings of a "walk in the woods" designed to give an instance of what one forest sounds like on one particular day. We listen to the first to learn the characteristics of the song; we listen to the second for some sort of aesthetic pleasure. This is not to deny that someone can listen to the former recordings aesthetically, but for most people aesthetic pleasure in the sounds of nature is generated by a listening experience of a particular token set of sounds.
- 10 This usage arguably differs from Schafer's in *The Tuning of the World*. He there defines the "soundscape" as the "sonic environment" (p. 274), and at one point he says that the "soundscape is a field of interactions, even when particularized into *its component sound events*" (p. 131, emphasis added). This appears to imply that the soundscape, that is, the sonic "environment," consists of sound events.
- 11 Schafer has developed a series of "ear cleaning" exercises designed to teach people to pay real attention to the sounds around them. See *The Tuning of The World*, Chapter 14.
- 12 See Steven Feld, "Sound Structure as Social Structure," *Ethnomusicology* 28 (1984):

- 383-409, and Steven Feld, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).
- 13 Steven Feld, "Aesthetics as Iconicity of Style (uptown title); or (downtown title) 'Lift-up-Over Sounding': Getting Into the Kaluli Groove," in Charles Keil and Steven Feld, *Music Grooves* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 126.
 - 14 Feld, "Sound Structure as Social Structure," p. 395.
 - 15 Indeed, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has used the intrusion of outside sounds to attempt to exclude potential wilderness areas from official designation as wilderness. The usual culprit is traffic noise, but airplanes and industrial sounds can also be a problem. For a discussion of wilderness solitude and various attempts to measure it, see Mark Woods, *Rethinking Wilderness in the United States* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1996).
 - 16 Robin Maconie, *The Concept of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 12-13.
 - 17 Schafer, "Music, Non-Music and the Soundscape," p. 35.
 - 18 Ibid.
 - 19 Maconie, *The Concept of Music*, p. 15.
 - 20 "Environmental aesthetics" is sometimes used to refer to the aesthetics of the environment around us, whether that environment is natural or human made. It is also sometimes used to refer to the recent tradition that focuses on the aesthetic value of unspoiled nature. Often environmental aesthetics is fueled by preservationist intuitions, that is, by a desire to find aesthetic values in nature that help to justify preservation of areas of land. For a vigorous defense of this sort of environmental aesthetics project, see Janna Thompson, "Aesthetics and the Value of Nature," *Environmental Ethics* 17 (1995): 291-305.
 - 21 In some earthworks, for example, Walter De Maria's *Lightning Field*, the relevance of sound can hardly be missed.
 - 22 Carroll, "On Being Moved by Nature," p. 257 [this volume, p. 99]. It is worth noting that Carroll seems also to accept an objectivity requirement on aesthetic responses to nature.
 - 23 Thompson, "Aesthetics and the Value of Nature," p. 293.
 - 24 John Cage says, "What is more angry than the flash of lightning and the sound of thunder? These responses to nature are mine and will not necessarily correspond to another's." See his *Silence* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1961), p. 10. Schafer speaks of *sound phobias* and *sound romances*. He has interviewed people in many countries to discover which phobias and romances are common across cultures and which are not. The cultural bias of many likes and dislikes is evident: "As people move away from open-air living into city environments, their attitudes toward natural sounds become benign.... every one of the Jamaicans interviewed disliked one or more animals or birds—particularly at night. Hooting owls, croaking frogs, toads and lizards were mentioned frequently. Barking dogs and grunting pigs were also strong dislikes. The animal sound most universally disliked was the purring cat" (*The Tuning of the World*, p. 147).

- 25 This claim is made by Carlson in "Appreciation and the Natural Environment." Thompson, in "Aesthetics and the Value of Nature," only requires that there exist some objective aesthetic judgments that judge some natural environments (for example, wildernesses) as more aesthetically valuable than human-made environments. The aesthetic value, thus established by objective judgments, provides reason for preservation.
- 26 The agreement requirement needs careful analysis beyond the scope of this paper. The requirement might have varying degrees of strength, from the claim that proper aesthetic judgments are true and require agreement from other (sensitive and rational) perceivers to the much weaker claim that aesthetic judgments must be based on reasons having to do with the object being appreciated. The weakened sense *does* shade into the guidance-by-object requirement. As I argue below, there are different ways of hearing the same physical sound events, but each way can claim to be grounded on the sounds and thus meet a weakened agreement requirement.
- 27 Monroe Beardsley, "The Aesthetic Point of View," in *The Aesthetic Point of View: Selected Essays*, eds. Michael J. Wreen and Donald M. Callen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 22. Note that Beardsley defines the aesthetic point of view in terms of the aesthetic value of something and the aesthetic value of that something in terms of its capacity to provide aesthetic gratification.
- 28 The account of the aesthetic appreciation of nature developed by Budd also analyzes the notion of aesthetic response without making commitments about aesthetic judgments. He says, "a response [is] aesthetic insofar as the response is directed at the experienced properties of an item, the nature and arrangements of its elements or the interrelationships among its parts or aspects, and which involves a felt positive or negative reaction to the item, considered in itself ... so that what governs the response is whether the object is intrinsically rewarding or displeasing to experience in itself." ("The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," p. 213) This definition makes our attentive responses to nature sounds aesthetic, but it does not entail a general agreement about the sort of positive or negative response that will be appropriate to a given sound event.
- 29 An example from Stockhausen illustrates this. In 1958 he spent much time flying in propeller planes. He is quoted in Jonathan Cott, *Stockhausen; Conversations with the Composer* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1973), pp. 30-31: "I was always leaning my ear ... against the window, listening with earphones directly to the inner vibrations. And although theoretically a physicist would have said that the engine sound doesn't change, it changed all the time *because I was listening to all the partials within the spectrum*. It was a fantastically beautiful experience." (emphasis added)
- 30 These examples come from W.A. Mathieu, *The Listening Book: Discovering Your Own Music* (Boston: Shambala Publications, 1991).
- 31 One of the most interesting recordings I know contains the sound of a car engine cooling off as this is juxtaposed with doves and frogs in the car's environment. The

- engine makes a very rhythmical sound, but this required very close miking to make it sound as prominent and dramatic as it does on this record.
- 32 Nor do I think the problem can be resolved by knowledge of the sounds *themselves*, whatever that might mean. I am in disagreement with Carlson, who claims: "Our knowledge of the nature of the particular environments yields the appropriate boundaries of appreciation, the particular foci of aesthetic significance, and the relevant acts of aspection for that type of environment." ("Appreciation and the Natural Environment," p. 274 [this volume, pp. 72-73]). I see no plausible way to apply this to sounds. Knowledge will certainly affect our experience and bring out features otherwise missed, but I do not think it can dictate frame or significance.
 - 33 Schafer, *The Tuning of the World*, p. 180.
 - 34 A good recording of wolf howls, such as *Wolf Talk* (Northsound, 1992), will include not just an isolated wolf howl or two but detailed sonic events that exhibit the ways that the wolves react to each other and howl with each other, and it will include the rich changing tapestry of sounds that surround a listener, such as typical insects for that time of day and place, various birds singing to each other, a rain storm in the forest, stream sounds, frogs, and other animals. The overall effect of a particular context in time in which the wolves live and produce their howls can be enormously powerful. It is the context in which the wolf-howl occurs that is open to multiple attention frames.
 - 35 Schafer, "Music, Non-Music and the Soundscape," p. 42.
 - 36 Ibid.
 - 37 The same story can be told, of course, for a "pure" soundscape comprising only natural sounds, for example, a "chorus" of howling wolves commenting on and responding to a bird and insect ostinato. In noting that a general freedom of ways of framing and listening applies to all types of soundscapes, including mixed ones, I do not wish to imply that all sounds are of equal aesthetic value to us. I have tried to explain why we place a greater value on natural sounds in "Appreciating the Sounds of Nature: Surveying Some Problems," delivered at the American Society for Aesthetics, Pacific Division meetings, April 1997.
 - 38 Schafer, "Music, Non-Music and the Soundscape," p. 40.
 - 39 Ibid., p. 42.
 - 40 Feld, "Sound Structure as Social Structure," p. 392.
 - 41 Ibid.
 - 42 Nicholas Cook, *Music, Imagination, and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 5.
 - 43 Roger Scruton, "Understanding Music," quoted by Cook, p. 20.
 - 44 Freedom is relative. I do not deny that there may be multiple ways to listen to particular musical works.
 - 45 As evidence for this, it is worth noting that in his classic "Categories of Art," *The Philosophical Review* 79 (1970): 334-367, Kendall Walton proposes just such an account. As Carlson notes in "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment, and Objectivity," p.17,

Walton there proposes that aesthetic judgments about nature are “relative to the way in which a perceiver happens to perceive a part of nature or a natural object on a particular occasion.” This is essentially correct for sounds. It does not rule out communication between similarly (mentally and physically) placed listeners.

- 46 Thanks are due to Jason Potter and Christopher Shields for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper and to Donald W. Crawford for comments on a related paper.

Scenery and the Aesthetics of Nature

Donald W. Crawford



I. Introduction

Many discussions of the aesthetic appreciation of nature have considered, from a wide range of perspectives, the various similarities and differences that may exist between it and our appreciation of art. This is not merely a recent concern, as one can find this topic discussed by eighteenth century aesthetic theorists as well as by traditional nature writers such as Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Aldo Leopold. But it has received considerable recent attention as contemporary authors have attempted to answer the question of whether there is a particular type of appreciation that is unique or most appropriate to our aesthetic appreciation of nature.

Precisely what aspects of nature are relevant to these discussions is itself not a straightforward issue for several reasons. First, nature often presents itself to us not in pristine forms, but in a variety of forms resulting from human modification or interaction—ranging from hybridized species of plants and animals to botanical gardens, arboretums, and parks, as well as to wilderness areas protected from naturally occurring forest fires. Second, there is the question of whether our focus should be on nature simply as the objective part of the non-human world or whether it should extend to expressive qualities we find in nature, such as the strength of an old oak, the delicacy of a cherry blossom, or the gracefulness of a gazelle. Third, does our aesthetic appreciation of nature extend to what we might take aspects of nature to reveal or symbolize, such as the layers of the Grand Canyon representing millennia of past geologic history or the dynamic force of a hurricane symbolizing how the forces of nature can in principle always overpower us, thereby showing our transience and limitations? Finally, there is the question of whether, when we appreciate natural scenery, we are appreciating nature *as nature* or as something other than it really is. This is the issue I focus on in this paper, examining some contemporary answers to this question that conclude that scenery is not, strictly speaking, part of the aesthetics of nature.

Before providing the details for the reasons behind this skepticism, it is important to keep in mind the multitudinous aspects of nature upon which aesthetic discussions focus, since it may be the case that, because of this variety, no single answer can be given to the question of whether a particular type of appreciation is

most appropriate to our aesthetic appreciation of nature. Let me briefly categorize this range of what constitutes nature appreciation before returning to the main issue of this essay.

a. *Objects and organisms*: This is the category of plants and animals, their parts, their products, as well as inorganic complexes that exhibit orderly structures or intensive qualities. A list of examples illustrates these subdivisions: a swan (organism), a cedar tree (a plant), a tulip blossom (a part of a plant), a bird's plumage (a part of an animal), a spider web (the product of an animal), a fallen pine cone (the product of a plant), a snowflake (an orderly inorganic structure), a sapphire (an orderly inorganic structure with intensive quality).

b. *Ecosystems*: A second aspect of nature especially prominent in recent aesthetics focuses on natural environments or ecological systems and communities—the interdependencies of organisms, climate, and inorganic elements as they exist in a particular locale through time.

c. *Events, phenomena, and monuments*: A third aspect of nature, more often found in traditional aesthetic literature and nature writing generally, consists of natural events, phenomena, and monuments—cascading streams and waterfalls, thunderstorms, cloud formations, the sun or moon shining through the clouds, waves breaking against the shore, sunsets, deep canyons, caves, etc. What is curious about this category is that in many cases the point of view of a spectator is brought into play; that is, these often are aspects of nature whose description essentially involves reference to some human location from which these aspects of nature are observed.

d. *Scenery*: A fourth paradigm of nature in the literature also, but even more explicitly, requires a human perspective. This is the category of scenery, which is frequently exemplified in landscapes. This is the initial focal point for my question, “Is Scenery Part of the Aesthetics of Nature?”

This could be a very short essay if I answered my question by saying, “Well, stage scenery is not part of the aesthetics of nature but natural scenery is.” Although I’m going to leave stage scenery in the wings, so to speak, one cannot ignore the fact that the applications of the English words “scene” and “scenery” to nature began only in the early eighteenth century, while their use in theatrical contexts was common more than a hundred years earlier. For example, when Shakespeare, in the Prologue to *Romeo and Juliet*, writes “In faire Verona, where we lay our scene,” he is simply referring to the stage and the place in which the staged action of the play or a part of it (a scene) is supposed to occur. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, it seems to have been some 13 years later, in 1605, when Ben Jonson first used the term to refer to the painted hangings set at the back and sides of the stage, which were designed to represent the locale of the play’s action.¹ Incidentally, there are no occurrences of this use of the term “scene” in Shakespeare. Jonson’s comment seems to mark the beginning of the transference of the word “scene” from the theater stage to scenes of nature—first as represented in stage sets but then to aspects of nature fit to be viewed, namely in the form

of *prospects* and *landscapes*. My question thus is more accurately put: “Is natural scenery—prospects and landscapes—part of the aesthetics of nature?”

In what follows I consider three arguments that, somewhat surprisingly, answer this question in the negative. The first says that scenery is not part of the aesthetics of nature because nature is objective while scenery in general and particularly landscapes and prospects are necessarily based on uniquely subjective human points of view; George Santayana seems to be the earliest writer to articulate this position.² The second argument denies that scenery is part of the aesthetics of nature because, it alleges, experiencing scenery follows the model of art, being concerned with compositional values, whereas the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature must follow the model of science and be informed by natural history and ecology. Allen Carlson is the best representative of this view.³ The third argument denies scenery a place in the aesthetics of nature on the grounds that the latter must involve active engagement with nature, while the experience of scenery is said to be passive and contemplative; Arnold Berleant and Holmes Rolston are well known for holding this position.⁴

II. Scenery as Landscape: Nature or Human Construct?

The category of scenery or scenic beauty is most clearly exemplified in the concept of landscape. Initially used in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to refer to the work of the Dutch *landschap* painters, “landskip” and then “landscape” were terms used to refer to scenic representations and then to scenery in general or a particular scene.⁵

Perhaps because of the influence of twentieth century geography, we now also use the term “landscape” in an objective sense, to refer to the condition of the land, both physical and cultural. Thus when we characterize a stretch of land as flat or mountainous, treed or barren, moist or arid, tilled or untilled, we are describing an aspect of the (its) landscape.⁶ Following this use it is common today to speak also of urban landscapes as well: townscapes, cityscapes, and the like.

The landscape vs. a landscape: The distinction between the general and the particular senses of the term “landscape” (“*the* landscape” versus “*a* landscape”) was first analyzed by Philip Gilbert Hamerton in 1885. According to Hamerton, “‘landscape’ without the [indefinite] article means the visible material world, all that can be seen on the surface of the earth by a man who is himself upon the surface,” while “‘*a* landscape’ means a piece of the earth’s surface that can be seen at once, and it is always understood that this piece will have a certain artistic unity or suggestion of unity in itself.”⁷

Both of Hamerton’s senses, it should be noted, introduce a subjective element that is retained in the common, contemporary conception of landscape—an expanse of land that is viewed in a single viewing. And Hamerton’s definition of “*a* landscape” introduces the notion of artistic unity—in other words, some degree of aesthetic value. In aesthetic contexts today, “landscape” refers to the visible

aspects of some portion of land, including both living and non-living things upon it (plants, animals, rocks, water, fallen trees, and leaves), as well as land/water and land/sky interfaces.⁸

We speak of *the* landscape in referring to the visible characteristics of the land, but we also speak of *a* landscape, of this one and that one. Landscapes, like scenic spots, have specific locations; they can be ostensibly defined and pointed to. Thus we have two distinct questions. The first, which I have already touched upon, is a question of definition or identification: What is it for something to *be* a landscape? The second is a question of individuation: What makes one landscape different from or the same as another one? There is no simple answer to this second question. Landscapes are peculiar ontological entities. They cannot be counted in any straightforward way. It makes little sense to say, "From here you can see four different landscapes."

George Santayana puzzled over this feature of landscapes, calling a landscape an "indeterminate object" with "no real unity."⁹ He concluded that although a landscape contains innumerable things that have determinate forms, from the standpoint of aesthetics each and every landscape is an indeterminate product of imagination and reality.¹⁰

Why did Santayana call landscapes "indeterminate objects"? First, he believed that objectively speaking there are no boundaries to landscapes, a point that is well illustrated by our experience of landscape paintings. Santayana, in describing our experience of *real* landscapes, is concerned with how it is that what we isolate in terms of our own vision becomes an identifiable object, since its boundaries seem to be drawn in a quite subjective way. Insofar as the landscape exists as a part of the real world, it is not a well-defined object of our visual experience.¹¹

Without here judging the cogency of Santayana's view that aesthetically landscapes are indeterminate products of imagination and reality, we can note that he correctly conceived one key to our identification and individuation of landscapes—a *point of view*—although Santayana failed to define this concept. Webster's dictionary comes surprisingly close and gives the following as its primary entry under "landscape": "a portion of land or territory which the eye can comprehend in a single view, including all the objects so seen, especially in its pictorial aspect."¹²

This is close, but not quite right in two respects. First, what is meant by "pictorial" requires additional explanation to avoid circularity. Second, this definition places too much weight on the meaning of "view," for if that term is interpreted neutrally, then any portion of land that occupies my field of vision becomes a landscape. But if I look down at the ground in front of my feet, I do not see a landscape—unless I am standing on the edge of a viewpoint and can see some distance away. So, in aesthetic contexts at least, a landscape is a portion (better, a *stretch*) of land as viewed from some distance, usually with a foreground but almost always with a midground and background—the three key focal points of our binocular vision. Often viewing a landscape makes use of a viewing position, such

as an advantageously elevated spot on the surface of the earth (a *perch* or *vantage point*). There may be an artificially raised platform for this purpose, like a mound or an observation tower, or one can view the land from a vehicle or a ship's deck. These are ways of seeing a landscape.

Although described from a point of view, a landscape cannot be identified with any particular view of it. The reason is simple enough. There are different views of the same landscape, and these may differ in aesthetic quality. So although a landscape is a topographic entity, not a psychological one, it takes on aesthetic significance in terms of the features we can discern from a particular vantage point or range of vantage points.¹³

Does this perspectival subjectivity preclude landscapes from being part of the aesthetics of nature? To answer in the affirmative is to embrace what might be called the "rainbow argument" and to claim that landscapes, like rainbows, are not really part of nature but subjective objects, since they *exist* only as seen from a point of view. In a recent book, Philip Fisher holds that two people standing side by side don't really see the same rainbow, nor do they see the same reflection in a pool of water, since what the two people see "is uniquely determined by the point where he or she stands, by the angle between the eye, raindrop, and sun."¹⁴ Fisher's conclusion is radically uncompromising:

Without human observers ... there are no rainbows. They [rainbows] are part of the human world. On an uninhabited planet, there would continue to be sun and rain, stars, and snow, but there would be no rainbow and no horizon.... In its requirement of a human observer to exist at all, rainbows and horizon lines are closer to music or geometry: had there been no human world there never would have been any such thing.¹⁵

Can one extend this argument from rainbows and horizon lines to scenery in general and landscapes in particular? In a recent essay, Holmes Rolston seems to think so: "In the forest itself, there is no scenery, for example; we compose the landscape vista. Subjective experience [that is, scenery] and objective forests beauty and trees—this conjoins and juxtaposes opposites"¹⁶

I think the invocation of the subjective/objective distinction is misplaced here. A landscape, as an object of aesthetic appreciation, is in fact an expanse of the surface of the earth (plus the objects on it as well as its interfaces with sky and water); and although its qualities are those we determine by looking at it from a particular viewpoint, that does not preclude it from being part of nature. Let me repeat the point made earlier: although a landscape is a topographic entity, not a psychological one, it takes on aesthetic significance in terms of the features we can discern from a particular vantage point. Even if we adopt Hamerton's view that what we call "a landscape" will have or suggest a certain artistic unity, the fact remains that the elements so unified are features of the land as seen from a particular vantage point. The argument from subjectivity fails in its various forms either by confus-

ing physical viewpoint with subjective point of view or by being based on the epistemologically untenable position that we never experience the world, only our own unique sensations.

There are two ways to recast the subjectivity argument in light of my objections. One is in terms of *what* is viewed, arguing that scenic features and relationships have no standing *as nature*, or are an inaccurate or inadequate experience of nature. Another is in terms of *how* these features are viewed, arguing that the features and relationships are not viewed *as nature*, but rather are viewed compositionally, like art. I believe that both of these reformulations of the subjectivity objection to scenery being part of the aesthetics of nature in fact devolve to the second objection, to which I now turn.

III. Nature as Art: Picturesque Scenery versus Ecology

The second major argument against scenery being part of the aesthetics of nature maintains that the experience of scenery is not the experience of nature *as nature* but rather the experience of nature *as art*. In contrast, this argument continues, the *appropriate* aesthetic appreciation of nature must experience it *as nature*, and that means our experience must be directed by knowledge about nature, specifically knowledge provided by scientific understandings of the workings of nature (such as natural history or ecology). For convenience, I call this *the ecology argument*. My approach here is first to discuss what it means to experience nature as art. I then consider whether this is incompatible with experiencing it as nature.

The claim that experiencing nature as scenery is viewing it as art harkens directly back to Kant's characterization of natural beauty in the *Critique of Judgment*. In §23 Kant remarks: "Natural beauty ... carries with it a purposiveness in its form, through which the object seems as it were to be predetermined for our power of judgment, and thus constitutes an object of satisfaction in itself."¹⁷ Here Kant seems to think that natural beauty is the exemplar of the "purposiveness of form" that he earlier (§14) claimed was the basis of pleasure in the beautiful. Nature is considered with respect to its formal properties, which for Kant means the spatial and temporal relationships of its elements. When nature appears beautiful, it is *as if* its elements were arranged in a manner designed for our reflective powers of judgment. Then later, in §45, he advances his tantalizing but non-poetic couplet: "Nature is beautiful because it looks like art, and art can be called beautiful only if we are conscious of it as art and yet it looks to us like nature."¹⁸ The beautiful in nature appears as if it were designed, made in accordance with rules of art. But Kant also says that art's purposiveness of form "must seem to be as free from all constraint by arbitrary rules as if it were a mere product of nature."¹⁹ And, true to his time, Kant was considering natural beauty solely in terms of nature's visible features—how nature appears to us. In his frequently maligned attempt to provide the divisions of the fine arts, Kant gives a curious definition of painting: "The *art of the painter* ... I would divide into that of the beautiful *depiction* of nature and

that of the beautiful *arrangement of its products*. The first would be *painting proper*, the second the art of *pleasure gardens*" [= landscape gardening].²⁰

Kant's further comments on the relationship between landscape gardening and landscape painting are revealing. A designed garden "coincides with merely aesthetic painting which has no definite theme (which puts air, land, and water together by means of light and shadows in an entertaining way)."²¹ And the (pure) judgment of taste concerning what is beautiful in a landscape garden "is determined in a single way: namely, to judge only the forms as they are offered to the eye, individually or in their interconnection, in accordance with the effect they have on the imagination."²²

This seems to be precisely the view that the ecology argument wishes to counter. On this view, the aesthetics of scenery is the aesthetics of the picturesque, in which one experiences only nature's formal or surface features as if it were a design and thus judges it by reference to compositional aesthetic values that have their origin in the visual arts. Historically the linkage has been to painting, but the picture one thinks of now is just as likely to be a photograph or a post card as a painting or drawing. What might be called the "postcardesque" is the offspring of the picturesque.

Historically, the concept of the picturesque developed along with the sublime to challenge traditional conceptions of natural beauty. Picturesque beauty was said to be more varied, less smooth and regular, relatively rough and intricate, and thus more surprising than the simply beautiful. In the eighteenth century, the distinction between the beautiful and the picturesque was a point of some contention. Some referred to the picturesque as a special subcategory of the beautiful, as noted by the common expression "picturesque beauty," while others advocated a new category of the picturesque as distinct from the beautiful. Under either formulation the picturesque emerged in competition with the classical model of natural beauty as symmetry and proportion. Attention also turned to wildness and wilderness in nature, even if this were the result of creative landscape design—the intricate and surprising scenes to be found around the bend, within the grotto, over the ha-ha. As an aesthetic category, the picturesque, although hotly debated, was influential in changing the course of landscape gardening in particular as well as nature appreciation in general, leaving a lasting mark on the aesthetics of nature in both theory and practice.

This is not the place to trace that fascinating intellectual history. But two points are worth making briefly. First, although the rise in popularity of the picturesque is often traced to the influence of Italian landscape painting and a reaction against formalism in landscape design, its genesis had other important sources as well. One of these was the Arcadian glorification of rural life and exploring nature, with the alleged benefit of moral regeneration—a theme that informed practical books on the art of gardening in the picturesque manner as well as guidebooks to picturesque travel. Both types of literature often incorporated a Neo-Platonic emphasis on the moral benefits of contemplating nature rather than reaping her harvests.

In addition, public parks created in the picturesque style were envisioned from their outset as retreats from the city in order to find spiritual renewal through experiences closer to nature. In short, the picturesque never was a purely *aesthetic* category, but integrated moral and social values as well. Second, the link between the picturesque in landscape painting and the picturesque in nature is through the concept of picturesque vision, an artistic way of looking at nature in terms of its composition. As expressed by Uvedale Price:

The use, therefore, of studying pictures, is not merely to make us acquainted with the combinations and effects that are contained in them, but to guide us, by means of those general heads (as they may be called) of composition, in our search of the numberless and untouched varieties and beauties of nature.... We may look upon pictures as a set of experiments of the different ways in which trees, buildings, water, etc. may be disposed, grouped, and accompanied, in the most beautiful and striking manner.²³

Visible beauty in nature is thereby called “picturesque” by association with what the art of painting has accomplished and what it is uniquely suited for. To view nature with a painter’s eye is to experience the picturesque.

This is adequate for my purposes here as one traditional account of what it means to experience nature *as art*, namely as the picturesque. A longer version of this essay could supplement this by an analogous account of the sublime, but that would not change the basic issues.

Let us return now to the argument that rejects the aesthetics of the picturesque and argues the aesthetic appreciation of nature must be directed or guided by knowledge about nature, specifically knowledge provided by a scientific understanding of the workings of nature (such as natural history or ecology). Is this argument strong enough to require the rejection of the claim that the aesthetics of nature can also include scenery—nature as viewed through a picturesque approach, the engagement of the well-trained eye, the “painter’s eye,” with nature’s varied appearances? Notice that I have been careful to frame the issue in terms of the compatibility of two types of aesthetic experiences. I do not believe that the defense of the picturesque requires maintaining that it is the *only* way to appreciate nature aesthetically.

Some defenders of the ecology argument appear to concede the above point, but argue that the picturesque appreciation of nature is outmoded and unimportant. J. Baird Callicott, for example, characterizes it as “the prevailing natural aesthetic,” but then dismisses it: “It does not flow naturally from nature itself; it is not directly oriented to nature on nature’s own terms; nor is it well informed by the ecological and evolutionary revolutions in natural history. It is superficial and narcissistic. In a word, it is trivial.”²⁴ In saying that a pictorial aesthetic does not flow naturally from nature itself, Callicott has in mind that it is dependent on the model of artistic composition and design features, and hence is not autonomous. Instead,

one should rely on “ecology, history, paleontology, geology, biogeography—each of them forms of knowledge or cognition—[to] penetrate the surface provided by direct sensory experience and supply substance to ‘scenery.’”²⁵ Thus he notes the importance of including sensory modalities in what he considers a more responsible aesthetics of nature, following what he calls Aldo Leopold’s “land aesthetic,” which is “self-consciously informed by evolutionary and ecological biology” but also “involves a subtle interplay between conceptual schemata and sensuous experience.”²⁶ Attractive as this view may be, it is not at all clear how this provides for an autonomous aesthetics of nature.

Allen Carlson provides another attempt to develop the ecological argument by distinguishing the aesthetic appreciation of nature from that of art. Carlson contrasts what he calls “design appreciation” with “order appreciation,” the former being paradigmatically appropriate to art while the latter is more appropriate to nature.²⁷ Although art appreciation indeed focuses on the art object, it is nonetheless artist or designer centered in the sense that all its significant qualities are considered the results of decisions by a designer. Design-centered appreciation thus requires attention to three factors: the aesthetic undertaking of the artist, the skills exercised, and the resulting product or artistic expression. A work of art is open to our appreciation and understanding just because we treat it as a work of human creation, an artifact. Although Carlson recognizes that the appreciation of some unconventional works of art might not map comfortably onto the design-centered model, he maintains that design appreciation is the paradigmatic, conventional model of art appreciation. On the contrary, order appreciation occurs when we approach an object’s qualities not in terms of its being designed but rather simply in terms of finding ordered patterns. So if an ordered pattern is to be appreciated and understood by us, something other than design must guide our appreciation. Carlson’s candidate for that which guides nature appreciation as order appreciation are the forces of nature—thus by the “order” in nature he means the natural order as revealed by natural science. In the non-theistic world of science, the forces of nature replace the artist, and order replaces design.

Underlying the ecology argument is the view that the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature can only be directed to the natural forces of nature as revealed by scientific investigation and theorizing. Appearances may be the starting point, but appearances without theory are a limited, and therefore inadequate, perspective. The ecology argument thus claims that the aesthetic appreciation of nature is not *of nature* unless it is guided by knowledge about nature, and in particular the knowledge provided by the natural and environmental sciences.²⁸ The contrasting view I am suggesting here is that the history of landscape painting and the incorporation of picturesque vision into approaches to the aesthetics of nature reveal a legitimate alternative against this fairly circumscribed scientific perspective. What the picturesque painter shows, and what we can experience when we adopt the painter’s eye in viewing nature, is not simply design or artistic composition but *the effects of nature* on us as perceivers. The impressionist painters, for

example, self-consciously represented nature's effects in the realm of reflected and refracted light in natural settings. The effects of visible nature not only include light, but also texture (as in the face of a cliff), color gradations (as in a canyon), shape, pattern and movement, as well as powerful forces (waterfalls, ocean waves crashing against the shore). Perceiving these effects of nature need not exclude scientific knowledge, but on the other hand it can occur without scientific knowledge constituting the controlling influence on appreciation in order for that appreciation to be both aesthetic and of nature.

There is a second way of showing the limitations of the ecology argument, which I do not have space to elaborate here, though I have argued for elsewhere.²⁹ There is no analysis of the concept of *nature* that supports a particular limited definition of "nature" in aesthetic contexts. In other words, there are no purely *aesthetic* grounds for privileging an experience of nature that is grounded in environmental science or ecology. From the pure standpoint of aesthetic experience, there is no way in principle to choose between the experience of patterns in natural phenomena as perceived from a particular human point of view and the experience of ecological harmonies within a scientifically circumscribed environment. That is not to deny that other considerations might lead us to place a higher value on the ecologically informed experience. But doing so will require an appeal to principles beyond the aesthetic and beyond the concept of nature to force that conclusion.

Several authors have explored this position recently. Yuriko Saito, for example, although agreeing that the aesthetic appreciation of nature can be informed by scientific understanding, takes exception to the claim that everything in nature is aesthetically appreciable: "Some phenomena in nature overwhelm us with their endangering aspects, making it very difficult, if not impossible for us to ... aesthetically appreciate their story. Furthermore, even if we are able to do so, I question the moral appropriateness of doing so.... not everything in nature can or should be appreciated aesthetically."³⁰ She has also argued that "the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature ... must embody a moral capacity for recognizing and respecting nature as having its own reality apart from our presence."³¹ Marcia Eaton adopts a similar position in arguing against an unrestrained imaginative experience of nature, noting that "imaginative fancies—often directed by fictional creations—can and do lead to harmful actions."³² The example she cites is the sentimental film version of the story *Bambi*, which has made it difficult for forest managers to convince the public that deer populations should be severely decreased in some areas. In Eaton's view, "a sound nature aesthetic ... must be based upon, tempered by, directed and enriched by solid ecological knowledge."³³ But her justification for this insistence goes beyond the realm of aesthetics to her embracing the overarching goal of a responsible stewardship of nature—creating and maintaining sustainable environments.

My criticism of the ecology argument should not be interpreted as denying that the experience of nature focusing on scientific and ecological aspects of nature as manifest in perception *can* be aesthetic. My point is rather that there are no pure-

ly aesthetic grounds for insisting that the aesthetic appreciation of nature *must* be tied to knowledge gained through the natural sciences, although there may very well be good non-aesthetic reasons for holding this view. Eaton may be right in holding that “human valuings are holistic” and that “we rarely experience something purely aesthetically or purely ethically or purely religiously or purely scientifically.”³⁴ But that does not mean we are unable intellectually to distinguish the various components underlying those valuings. Making such distinctions remains an important task of philosophical inquiry.

IV. The Experience of Scenery versus Aesthetic Engagement

The third and final argument I consider for excluding scenery from the aesthetics of nature is that the experience of scenery fails to satisfy a necessary condition for the aesthetic experience of nature, since it is a passive experience of nature as presented to us rather than our active engagement with nature.

There are two main variants of this claim. One version claims that the experience of scenery is founded on the mistaken, traditional conception of aesthetic experience as disinterested and contemplative. We are reminded that Shaftesbury introduced the concept of aesthetic disinterestedness by means of examples of viewing and appreciating nature without controlling it, owning it, or focusing on its providing gustatory pleasures.³⁵ This view then becomes entrenched in aesthetic theory from Kant and Schopenhauer to the present, and is probably best expressed by Jerome Stolnitz’s definition of the aesthetic attitude as the “disinterested (with no ulterior purpose) and sympathetic attention to, and contemplation of, any object of awareness whatever, for its own sake alone.”³⁶ There have been many recent critiques of this view, ranging from George Dickie’s well known criticism that it does not demarcate a special mode of attention to the feminist view that no vision is neutral vision and that some feminist art cannot be experienced in a detached, contemplative way.³⁷ Whatever the reason, the argument proceeds by assimilating the appreciation of scenery with disinterested contemplation, and in rejecting this traditional view scenery falls by the wayside, so to speak.

This rejection of aesthetic disinterestedness does not go far enough to draw the conclusion, however. What is required is an alternative model of aesthetic experience against which one can test whether the experience of scenery qualifies as, or is eliminated from, the aesthetic. Even if one grants that the traditional way of characterizing the experience of scenery is flawed, it does not follow that scenery is not part of the aesthetics of nature. To show the absurdity of this conclusion it is sufficient to point out that on similar grounds—the rejection of disinterested contemplation as the paradigm for experiencing art—one could conclude that traditional art is not part of the aesthetics of art.

A second and more promising variant to this argument is that the aesthetic experience of nature *as nature* is an experience that is not object-oriented but instead requires active engagement with nature. Arnold Berleant is probably the most

forceful proponent of this position.³⁸ To exclude the experience of scenery from the aesthetic experience of nature one might argue, as Berleant seems to, that aesthetically active engagement is necessary to experience *nature* and that the experience of scenery does not satisfy this condition because it is not a “participatory aesthetics.”³⁹

I am actually quite sympathetic to the philosophical underpinnings of Berleant’s argument, since I believe that perception is not a passive affair. Berleant says that “perception is not passive but an active, reciprocal engagement with environment” and that perception “is not just a visual act but a somatic engagement in the aesthetic field.”⁴⁰ One should note in passing that Kant often gets blamed unfairly for the view that sense perception is passive, if sense perception is construed as experience. What Kant says when he is consistent is that sensibility is our ability to be affected by objects but that experience (or consciousness) does not come into existence through sense perception alone. Rather experience—even sense experience—requires the active powers of mind (imagination and understanding) working with sensibility.

The problem with the aesthetic engagement argument is that its underlying assumption about perception in general undermines the conclusion that scenery is not part of the aesthetics of nature. It may be that the experience of scenery is not engaged with as many aspects of the natural environment as one thinks it should be, but given the view that *all* perception is engagement with an environment, the experience of scenery certainly qualifies. Here again, we find that certain values are being prioritized over others and that these prioritizations simply take the form of denying that a type of experience is aesthetic (meaning only that it is not as significant an aesthetic experience) or is not an experience of nature (meaning only that there are other aspects of nature more important than what we attend to in experiencing scenery).

These issues can be discussed and evaluated on their merits, but the three arguments against scenery being part of the aesthetics of nature make it difficult to do so, hiding the real issues behind definitions of “nature” or the “aesthetic.”

V. Conclusion

To sum up: The first argument denies that scenery is part of the aesthetics of nature because scenery is not nature, but dependent on human perception—a product of nature and human perception. This argument fails either because it confuses physical viewpoint with subjective point of view or by being based on the epistemologically untenable position that we never experience the world, only our own sensations.

The second argument denies that scenery is part of the aesthetics of nature because the experience of scenery is not the experience of nature *as nature* but only of nature *as art*. This argument runs into trouble because it fails to recognize that when we adopt the painter’s eye in viewing scenery we are experiencing *the*

effects of nature on us as perceivers. In addition, this argument must resort to extra-aesthetic grounds for privileging an experience of nature that is guided exclusively by the natural sciences, thereby excluding expressive qualities and associations, bodily engagements with nature, and imaginative experiences and responses.

And the third argument denies that scenery is part of the aesthetics of nature because the experience of scenery lacks a necessary condition of aesthetic experience: engagement. This fails because it is based on an epistemological premise about the nature of human perception and experience that by its very universality would also be applicable to the experience of scenery.

As for me, there will be times when I'll just marvel at a rainbow; and other times when I'll drive into a scenic roadside pull out to view the distant landscape with the painter's eye; and, yes, there will be times when in viewing a damp meadow I will reflect on its being a stage between lake and forest; and times when I'll want to walk through the forest during a thunderstorm and feel totally immersed in nature. But I do not believe that any analyses of the concepts of the *aesthetic* or of *nature* will require or exclude any of the above. So until someone comes up with a better argument, I'll continue to enjoy natural scenery and think that I'm both experiencing nature and doing so aesthetically.

Notes

- 1 In *Masque of Blackness* [1605] Jonson writes: "First, of the Scene, was draune a *Landschap*, consisting of small woods...."
- 2 George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty: Being the Outline of an Aesthetic Theory* [1896] (New York: Collier Books, 1961), p. 99 ff.
- 3 Allen Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1979): 267-276 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 2]; "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, eds. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 199-227. These two essays are reprinted as chapters 4 and 7 in Carlson's *Aesthetics and the Environment: The Appreciation of Nature, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2000). See also: Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), p. 243.
- 4 Arnold Berleant, *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991). See also Berleant's *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992) [Editors' Note: Chapter 11 of *Aesthetics of Environment*, "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature" is reprinted in this volume, Chapter 3], and *Living in the Landscape: Toward an Aesthetics of Environment* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998); and Holmes Rolston III, "The Aesthetic Experience of Forests," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 157-166 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 10].
- 5 M.W. Mikesell, "Landscape," in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), Volume 8, p. 576. See also J.B. Jackson, "The Mean-

ing of Landscape,” *Kulturgeografi* 88 (1964): 47-51. According to Ogden and Ogden, the word “landscape” was first published in English in a translation of Giovanni Paolo Lamazzo’s *Trattato dell’arte de la Pittura* in 1598, or possibly in an undated treatise on perspective at about the same time. See Henry V.S. Ogden and M.S. Ogden, *English Taste in Landscape in the Seventeenth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1955).

- 6 The conception of the natural landscape was developed by the American geographer Carl O. Sauer, who urged geographers to attempt to reconstruct the condition of an area prior to human incursion and to use this as the base line for geographical studies. The marginal relevance of this procedure to the analysis of current landscape conditions (or their recent evolution) led the majority of geographers to invoke the distinction between primitive and cultivated landscapes, and to concentrate on the latter. See Mikesell, “Landscape,” pp. 576-578. Sauer’s seminal 1925 article, “The Morphology of Landscape,” is included in *Land and Life: A Selection from the Writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer*, ed. John Leighly (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 315-350.

- 7 Philip Gilbert Hamerton, *Landscape* (London: Seeley; 1885), p. 2.

- 8 It is worth noting that a view of only the sky or water is no longer a view of a landscape. Hamerton makes this point nicely: “In its general sense, *landscape* is also understood to include lakes and even the sea, because land and water are often visible at the same time. Strictly speaking, a view of the open sea, far out of sight of any shore, can hardly be called a landscape—it is a waterscape; but for the sake of convenience the generic term *landscape* is supposed to include everything that is seen upon the surface of the globe” (Hamerton, *Landscape*, p. 2). Yi-Fu Tuan notes that the Chinese term for the art genre “landscape” is *shan shui* [mountain and water]. Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1974), p. 127.

- 9 Santayana, *Sense of Beauty*, p. 99.

- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

- 11 In looking at a landscape painting, ordinarily one is not concerned with the fact that the representational canvas is bounded by a picture frame. The frame or edge does not interfere with our appreciation of the represented scene; it probably enhances it. Imagine a painting that had an indeterminate edge, oozing out onto the wall or down to the ground. So we accept the boundaries of the painting. Why? There are two reasons for this, and they coalesce. First, when viewing a picture we respect the convention of the frame (or at least the edge of the picture); we do not criticize the painting because it does not depict a wider scene—we accept whatever expanse it provides. The frame or edge *defines* the landscape of the painting; this is a primary convention of representational art. We concentrate our attention on the depicted space of the painting; the space of the painting becomes, so to speak, self-contained. Second, when we do this, and treat the represented space as a realistic representation, we assume that the space so depicted is contiguous with some spatial reality. We do not believe the scene ends where the frame is, but that it continues to the sides, above and

below the frame. In other words, we look at the painting as if it is a portion of a larger landscape.

- 12 Webster's *New International Dictionary of the English Language*, Second Edition, unabridged (Springfield: G. & C. Merriam, 1937), p. 1389.
- 13 One further complication should be noted. What is it we view when we see a distant stretch of land from an airplane or balloon? A view directly down onto the earth's surface from a balloon does not seem to be accurately described as a view of the landscape; rather it is an aerial perspective. Hamerton recognizes the difficulties here, remarking that "views from the summits of lofty mountains or from a balloon may come under the term *landscape*; but they are hardly landscapes, they are panoramas" (Hamerton, *Landscape*, p. 3). Relatively low views from airborne craft, however, do seem to be views of the landscape. Whether the resulting views are considered landscapes seems to depend upon the angle of viewing relative to the expanse of the surface of the earth. A landscape is paradigmatically a stretch of land as viewed from the surface of the earth; we characterize the landscape primarily both in terms of its qualities and the constituent objects we can recognize at the macro level, as they are present to view.
- 14 Philip Fisher, *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 36-37.
- 15 Ibid., p. 37.
- 16 Rolston, "Aesthetic Experience in Forests," p. 161 [this volume, p. 189].
- 17 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* [1790], trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), §23, p. 246 (marginal page number).
- 18 Ibid., §45, p. 306 (my translation).
- 19 Ibid., §45, p. 306.
- 20 Ibid., §51, p. 323.
- 21 Ibid., §51n., p. 323n.
- 22 Ibid., §51, p. 324.
- 23 Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque, As Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful; and on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape*, Second Edition (London: 1796), Volume I, pp. 4-5.
- 24 J. Baird Callicott, "The Land Aesthetic," in *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*, Second Edition, eds. Richard G. Botzler and Susan J. Armstrong (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998), p. 134. Other versions of this essay have appeared in *Orion Nature Quarterly* 3 (1984): 16-22, and *Renewable Resources Journal* 10 (1992): 12-17.
- 25 Callicott, p. 136.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Carlson, "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature."
- 28 This view is explicitly articulated and defended by Carlson in "Appreciation and the Natural Environment."
- 29 Donald W. Crawford, "The Aesthetics of Nature and the Environment," in *Blackwell Guide To Aesthetics*, ed. Peter Kivy (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

- 30 Yuriko Saito, "The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 109.
- 31 Yuriko Saito, "Appreciating Nature on Its Own Terms," *Environmental Ethics* 20 (1998): 135-149 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 7], p.148 [this volume, p. 151].
- 32 Marcia Muelder Eaton, "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 149-156 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 9], p. 152 [this volume, p. 175] Eaton here is criticizing Emily Brady's views as advanced in "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 139-147 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 8].
- 33 Eaton, "Fact and Fiction," p. 153 [this volume, p. 177].
- 34 Ibid., p. 155 [this volume, p. 179-180].
- 35 Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *The Moralists: A Philosophical Rhapsody* [1709], Part III, Section II, in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*, eds. Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 246-248.
- 36 Jerome Stolnitz, *Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art Criticism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), pp. 34-35.
- 37 George Dickie's view is expressed in many of his writings, but his classic statement is in "The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude," *The American Philosophical Quarterly* 1 (1964): 55-65. An excellent summary of recent feminist theorizing in aesthetics can be found in Mary Devereaux's "Oppressive Texts, Resisting Readers and the Gendered Spectator: The New Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48 (1990): 337-347. See also Peg Brand, "Can Feminist Art Be Experienced Disinterestedly?" in *Aesthetics: A Reader in Philosophy of the Arts*, eds. David Goldblatt and Lee B. Brown (Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 1997), pp. 532-535.
- 38 Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*; see especially Chapter 2, "The Aesthetic Sense of Environment," and Chapter 11, "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature" [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 3].
- 39 Ibid., p. 171 [this volume, p. 84].
- 40 Ibid., pp. 18 and 166 [this volume, p. 80].

Aesthetic Appreciation and the Many Stories about Nature

Thomas Heyd



In recent years the aesthetic appreciation of nature has received considerable attention.¹ This area of research has been much propelled forward by the work of Allen Carlson. With the publication of his *Aesthetics and the Environment* we now have a handy volume that brings together many of his writings on environmental aesthetics.²

In this essay I show that there are important problems with Carlson's claim that natural science (and its predecessors and analogues³) does or should provide the primary account or story informing our aesthetic appreciation of nature.⁴ I propose that there are good reasons for believing that aesthetic appreciation does and should benefit from many, diverse stories, as gathered by people from a great variety of walks of life and cultures.⁵

I. Carlson's Case for the Priority of the Scientific Story

Carlson argues that aesthetic appreciation requires knowledge if it is properly to engage with its object. On Carlson's account, aesthetic appreciation involves a kind of "sizing up,"⁶ and, hence, requires knowledge of the thing to be appreciated. So, appreciation of works from the contemporary art scene would be illfounded if, out of ignorance, they were appreciated as works from the Renaissance are appreciated, since the respective works are intended to be differently appreciated. Carlson proposes that the remedy for this situation is art history, since it gives us insight into the various aims and intentions presumably expressed in the diverse artworks. In the case of nature, though, aesthetic appreciation cannot be based on an understanding of aims and intentions expressed since nature is not the result of artistic design.

To understand what it is to aesthetically appreciate nature Carlson asks us to consider certain *avant-garde* and anti-art works, such as Jackson Pollock's dripped paintings or chance poetry, which, similarly to the natural world, are not the result of artistic design. Carlson's suggestion is that in those cases, as well as in the case of nature, the object of our aesthetic appreciation is the order exhibited.

In the case of these *avant-garde* and anti-art works, our appreciation is guided by knowledge of “the story” behind the artwork, that is, by an account of how the artist has chosen a particular technique or circumstance to generate the order appreciable in the work. Carlson proposes that in the case of nature we analogously do and should look for the story behind *its* generation, and that the proper story in this case is provided by natural science (or, less ideally, by its common-sense predecessors and analogues). He concludes that for proper aesthetic appreciation of nature we should have scientific knowledge of its etiology.

In the following section I identify problems with three aspects of Carlson’s proposal. First, I question the supposition that knowing the etiology either of an artwork or of an aspect of nature is necessary or sufficient for their respective aesthetic appreciation. Second, I point out that in many cases scientific knowledge may be neutral, or even harmful, for our aesthetic appreciation of nature, because it directs our attention to the theoretical level and the general case, diverting us from the personal level and the particular case that we actually need to engage. Third, I note that importing the categories of science into aesthetic appreciation of nature may constitute a hindrance to our capacity for discovery, through aesthetic appreciation, of what nature is.

II. Problems regarding Etiology, Theory, and Categories

Etiologies and aesthetic appreciation: Directing ourselves, first of all, to Carlson’s analysis of our intercourse with artworks, we may ask whether, generally speaking, art history indeed is the basis for their proper aesthetic appreciation. Even if art history may be a useful tool for individuals who frequent art museums, since it provides the viewer with more or less ready-made categories into which one can place the works on display, aesthetic appreciation neither requires, nor is exhausted by, art-historical classification.

If appreciation is a form of “sizing up,” as Carlson suggests, then in appreciation we should like to ask whether a particular piece has certain strengths due to the organization of its parts that other works do not, whether it is innovative in important respects, what gives it its aesthetic appeal and power in the context of the artist’s *oeuvre*, and so on. No potted art history, however, will be able to supply these tools for appreciation, which, arguably, can only be acquired through lengthy, searching exposure to many works; continuous conversation with others about suitable criteria for evaluation; personal reflection on the significance of the work’s style, execution, personal impact, and so on.

The insufficiency of art history in proper aesthetic appreciation of artworks is particularly evident once we move into the contemporary art scene for which no art-historical guide is available. In these latter circumstances it should quickly become evident that art history can only provide criteria for conservatism in art; truly innovative works fall entirely outside the ken of criteria developed with the

aid of art history. This was also true, for example, of *avant-garde* and anti-art works that do not have (what Carlson calls) a design.

On Carlson's account, art history is to help us in aesthetic appreciation by providing us with etiologies, and therefore providing those works with a framework of some sort. That is, knowing the aims of the *avant-garde* and anti-art movements may help us understand why their products fit so strangely next to their predecessors in art history. But, from a more fundamental perspective, etiologies by themselves would be supremely useless; the fundamental feature in aesthetic appreciation surely is attentive *experience* of the thing to be appreciated, and such experience may not be necessarily furthered through etiology.

For instance, even if, through knowledge of their etiologies, we may be able to make sense of the peculiar look of Pollock's paintings or of odd juxtapositions in surrealist chance poetry, these works, insofar as aesthetically appreciable, really want to be attentively *seen* and *heard*, respectively. To worry about how they came about is like reading the label of origin on a bottle of wine, or the biographical note on the wall next to a painting in an art museum: it puts things in context, but surely is secondary to properly experiencing the thing (the wine or the painting).

If we now consider the case of nature, we may note that having knowledge of the etiology of some natural object, site, or event, similarly may be a convenient way to put things into a comprehensible framework. Knowing that arbutus trees (*arbutus menziesii*), endemic to the Northwest Pacific Coast, are related to the heather bush (*erica*) through their common family (*ericaceae*) may give me a sense of how diversity in environments can engender diversity in speciation, but surely is not a necessary nor a sufficient condition for their proper aesthetic appreciation. In other words, I may be able to quite thoroughly enjoy a local stand of arbutus and garry oak trees (*quercus garryana*) located in a camas (*camassia quamash*) meadow without needing to know their evolutionary history, their taxonomic nomenclature, or even their individual developmental story.

In fact, my appreciation of their special virtues, such as the sensuously skin-like, red-green trunks of the arbutus trees, or the weathered-looking, deeply corrugated trunks of the garry oak trees, may be *hampered* if I am preoccupied with either their ontogeny or their phylogeny. Just as the aesthetic appreciation of the painting or the wine primarily require that I attend to what I am *now* presented with (certain paint marks on a flat surface, and certain flavors, colors and odors in the vinous liquid, respectively), so the aesthetic appreciation of the stand of trees demands that I mainly focus on what *now* is present to me while attending to the trees.

Abstract theory versus the concrete particular: More generally, even if in some circumstances scientific knowledge may be helpful in the aesthetic appreciation of nature, in others it may be neutral or even harmful. While walking to the bottom of the Grand Canyon from its rim, knowledge of geology *may* be helpful to our aesthetic appreciation if it makes us focus with attention on the various visible

strata uncovered by the river's action throughout the ages. Such knowledge may serve a similar function to the role played by knowledge of the manner in which layering of paint on a canvas generates certain distinguishable coloring effects in a de Kooning painting, or of the manner in which layering of plot lines in a novel generates certain noticeable dramatic effects. But in some other circumstances scientific knowledge will be quite irrelevant or even harmful.

For instance, to know that water has been chemically identified as made up of molecules composed of two positively charged hydrogen atoms and one negatively charged oxygen atom likely has no impact on my aesthetic appreciation of great expanses and depths of the stuff, while I sit at the Vancouver Island shores of the Juan de Fuca Strait gazing across to the Olympic Mountains. And, if my cognizance of geology, chemistry, or botany were to lead me to really focus on, for example, seeking appropriate scientific classifications for the Olympic Mountains, the watery expanse, or the arbutus tree I sit beneath, diverting my attention from the natural objects and sites concretely at hand, such knowledge should be considered harmful to my aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment in which I am immersed.⁷

The trouble with using scientific knowledge as a guide in these circumstances may be partly due to the fact that scientific knowledge characteristically draws our attention to the *theoretical* level, pretending to encompass all things of a certain kind. So, what we learn about arbutus trees from natural science is (supposed to be) true of arbutus trees in general. This perspective may draw me away from taking note of the *concrete* character of the particular thing I seek to aesthetically appreciate: It is *myself* standing in front of *this* arbutus tree who *now* experiences it as sensuous and sinuous.⁸ And it is on the basis of that very *particular*, concrete experience that I come to an appreciation of this tree here. Only subsequently may it be relevant that some of the features found in this particular tree similarly are represented in other arbutus trees.

Categories and discovery: This leads to another problem with Carlson's proposal. Carlson claims that we need the categories derived from science, and its common-sense predecessors and analogues, in order to properly perceive and appreciate nature. Part of Carlson's emphasis on the importance of science for aesthetic appreciation derives from his conviction that science "is the paradigm of that which reveals objects for what they are and with the properties they have."⁹ What Carlson seems to overlook is that aesthetic appreciation is also a *sui generis* way of coming to know what things are. In other words, it is a form of discovery that can break the mould of previously taken-for-granted categories and beliefs. And, insofar as it is discovery of what nature *is* that we aim at in aesthetic appreciation, it may be counterproductive to overly rely on any set categories, be they scientific or other.

In the following section, I propose that we do not limit our possibilities of discovery of nature by the categories of natural science and its predecessors and analogues, but that we consider a diversity of stories or accounts as our guides in its aesthetic appreciation.

III. The Many Stories and our Appreciative Capacities

Carlson quite correctly points out that aesthetic appreciation requires engagement. As just discussed, we may ask, though, if theoretical knowledge—as offered by science, for example—is or should be a primary component of such engagement and, hence, appreciation. Clearly, certain objects of aesthetic appreciation, such as Rembrandt's miniature etchings, primarily call for sensitive *sensory* attention more than any particular knowledge. Similarly, some works, such as musical works intended to evoke places or seasons, and all literary creations, probably require generous doses of *imagination* more than anything else. So, if aesthetic appreciation entails meaningfully engaging a natural object, site, or event, then some other ingredients besides theoretical knowledge, namely a keen capacity for sensory attention and an unprejudiced, agile imagination, may be of great importance.¹⁰

It is well known that perceptual attention is prone to fatigue. For most individuals it becomes very difficult to spend more than a few seconds looking at a painting, even if they expressly go to a gallery to view it. Furthermore, the number of people who complain of boredom or sleepiness even while listening to concerts of compositions that they claim to value is considerable. There are very few among us, excepting the most experienced connoisseurs perhaps, moreover, who are able to maintain their attention on the *bouquet* of a particular wine after the first few sips have been considered. All this poses a problem for aesthetic appreciation, both in the case of art and in the case of nature, since to make appropriate aesthetic assessments we likely require greater endurance than we can ordinarily offer.

I propose that we may be able to extend our "aesthetic endurance," if we may call it that, by enriching our aesthetic horizons, by increasing the contrast in our perceptual experience, and, generally, by enhancing the possibilities for the play of the imagination. One way of doing this is through coming to know a diversity of stories. In the following I discuss three sorts of stories: artistic, non-artistic, and non-verbal.

Artistic stories and aesthetic community: Nature is a term that covers a lot,¹¹ but even if we restrict ourselves to landscapes there is a countless number of accounts or stories that can and do guide us in our aesthetic appreciation of nature. We may consider, for example, the impact of the stories about the Canadian West told by Rudy Wiebe, or the story of Peter Handke's visit to Mont Ste. Victoire.¹² Visiting the Canadian West after reading Wiebe we may be able to find aesthetic pleasure in travelling across what might be an otherwise alien land, with its seemingly endless expanses of prairie grass and its so-called badlands. Visiting Mont Ste. Victoire after reading Handke's account, itself inspired by Paul Cézanne's countless painted renderings of the mountain, we may feel the invitation to scrutinize this mountain with some of the aesthetic enthusiasm for its craggy rocks that both of these artists felt for it.

The artistic stories of our artists carry out an important service, since aesthetic

appreciation of nature often is much more accessible to the rest of us ordinary people if mediated by the stories of capable and experienced aesthetic appreciators. Their accounts also—often strikingly—are more capable of inspiring aesthetic appreciation than some of the relevant “scientific stories.” Compare, for example, the following summary geological description of the island of Santorini with the account of the same place given by the contemporary Greek poet George Seferis.

Santorini, also anciently called Thera, is a volcanic island in the Aegean Sea that exploded at some point in time in the Minoan period. Some have identified it with Homer’s “Phaiakian land,” which to Odysseus “looked like a shield lying on the misty face of the water.”¹³ As a preface to his poem “Santorini,” Seferis quotes *Guide to Greece*: “Thera geologically consists of pumice and china clay, and in its gulf ... islands have appeared and disappeared.” This gives us a capsule account of the scientific information on this extraordinary island.¹⁴ Seferis’ preface continues quoting *Guide to Greece*, which says that Santorini “was the center of an ancient cult in which lyric dances of solemn and austere rhythm, called *gymnopaedia*, were performed.”¹⁵ Seferis’ poem “Santorini” expresses his aesthetic appreciation for the island in the context of his appreciation for this ancient rhythm.

“Santorini”

Lean if you can toward the dark sea, forgetting
the sound of a flute above bare feet
which trod in your sleep in that other sunken life.

Write if you can on your last sherd
the day, the name, the place,
and throw it into the sea to sink.

We found ourselves naked on the pumice
seeing the islands breaking the surface,
seeing the red islands sinking
in their sleep, in our sleep....¹⁶

A visitor to the flat surface on the promontory-peninsula on Santorini where the *gymnopaedia* dances possibly were performed will see a large expanse of sea below and surrounding her on all sides, except on the side that connects the peninsula to the rest of the half-volcano that remains since the island exploded. If she is knowledgeable in geology, she might discover that it is a volcanic island consisting of pumice and china clay; this bit of knowledge may help her classify this part of nature of the island Santorini. I submit, however, that if she knows Seferis’ poem she will be much better equipped to aesthetically appreciate her natural surrounds.¹⁷

With regard to the stories of natural science, Carlson says that “They illuminate nature as ordered and in doing so give it meaning, significance, and beauty—

qualities those giving the stories find aesthetically appealing.”¹⁸ I propose that having Seferis’ poem in mind while exploring Santorini is a very fruitful way to “illuminate nature” so that we can perceive it as having “meaning, significance, and beauty”: the sea may now be noticed as being dark and deep, echoing the Homeric “wine-dark seas”; the contrast between the worn character of the rocks on the ancient square, carrying the imprint of many generations of feet, and the sharp, rough rocks on the steep cliffs off the promontory may now be appreciated more readily; the precarious condition and ephemeral character of the small islands jutting out on the inside of the ancient caldera may now be recalled.

Moreover, the poet’s perspective may provide us not only with a viewpoint to his appreciation of nature, but also with a perspective on the appreciation of nature that the *gymnopaidia* dancers and their contemporaries may have had. He places us in a state of contemplation that may recreate some of their perceptions for us. Stories such as the one contained in Seferis’ poem widen our aesthetic horizon, such that we enter into aesthetic community with aesthetic appreciators spanning time and possibly reaching across cultures. In this way such stories may facilitate our later-coming aesthetic appreciation of nature.

Non-artistic stories and perceptual salience: There are many non-artistic accounts, originating in various societies’ interactions with non-human nature, that may guide us in our aesthetic appreciation.¹⁹ We may consider, for example, the Dreaming of the aboriginal peoples of Australia. The Dreaming is an account of the supernatural beings that inhabited and still are present in the aboriginal peoples’ lands. These beings do not have an existence separate from nature but interpenetrate it. One anthropologist puts it this way: “the isomorphic fit between the natural and supernatural means that all nature is coded and charged by the sacred, while the sacred is everywhere within the physical landscape. Myths and mythic trackings cross over numerous tribal boundaries and over thousands of kilometres, and every particular form and feature of the terrain has a well-developed ‘story’ behind it.”²⁰

This means that a stretch of land, which to an uninstructed person may appear nearly indistinguishable from the next, may contain great numbers of perceptually salient features in the eyes of a person knowledgeable of the Dreaming. We may take note, for example, of the Tjati (Red Lizard) story from Uluru (Ayers Rock):

Tjati is a small, red lizard who lives on the mulga flats. In the creation period he traveled to Uluru past Atila. When Tjati threw his kali, a curved throwing stick, it embedded itself in the rock face of Uluru. Tjati scooped with his hands into the rock face to retrieve the kali, leaving a series of bowl-shaped hollows at Walaritja. Unable to recover his weapon, Tjati finally died in a cave at Kantju, where his other implements and bodily remains survive as large boulders on the cave floor.²¹

This story illustrates well the details in the landscape that may become perceptually salient through knowledge of it, much in analogy to the manner in which a rock

face might become perceptually salient for someone knowledgeable of the geological story concerning its different strata. Salience is important to aesthetic appreciation insofar as it makes objects, sites, or events perceptible and, hence, makes appreciation possible. That is, if aesthetic appreciation depends on our capacity to *take note* of a thing, to make a thing the object of our sensory attention and of our imaginative play, then stories such as this one may be of great value. In contrast to scientific classification, which because of its abstractness draws us *away* from the present thing, such stories, because of their concreteness, draw us *into* the object, site, or event.

Non-verbally expressed stories and the play of the imagination: Besides verbally expressed artistic and non-artistic stories, we may take note of various other cultural resources that “tell” stories in a non-verbal fashion. Among the cultural resources that may “tell” stories, we can list paintings, engravings, sculptures; architectural, musical, film, and dance creations; fine wines and foods; as well as dendroglyphs, monuments, such as tombs, ceremonial buildings, stone arrangements; and so on. Any cultural resource can serve the function of leading a person to reflect on the aesthetic appreciation of its makers; in this way contemporary appreciators, once again, may come into a wider aesthetic community.

Some of those cultural goods, moreover, may make *explicit* reference to the natural world, as is the case with many paintings and sculptures featuring images of landscapes, animals, or plants. In this way those who “read” the stories contained in the objects come to be reminded of the natural environment that surrounds them, and may be enticed to fixate on that environment a little longer, thereby aiding in the aesthetic appreciation of those things.²²

Some cultural resources, however, may only *implicitly* “tell” stories that guide us in our aesthetic appreciation of the natural world. For instance, finding rock art (petroglyphs and pictographs), or dendroglyphs, or ancient tombs at some relatively remote location may lead us to wonder what plants and animals the people who were there used for food, what pool or creek they used to supply themselves with water, what overhangs they used as shelters, and so on.

Furthermore, we may wonder whether any landmarks or species or natural phenomena near such sited cultural resources may have been perceptually salient in such a way as to have been an object of aesthetic appreciation to our predecessors at such locations. Sometimes the arrangements of sites supply possible answers to such questions. I encountered a particularly striking example a few years ago while visiting two dolmens (megalithic, table-like structures) in Antequera, Spain. From the deepest part of the interior space of one of the dolmens, one has a view through the opening that perfectly frames a mountain with a shape of a head in profile, leading me to imaginatively attend to this feature in the land in a way I certainly would not have otherwise.

In sum, diverse stories, verbal and non-verbal, artistic and non-artistic, may in various ways stimulate the play of the imagination, which itself may facilitate our capacity to perceptually attend to the natural world, which in turn may lead to enhanced aesthetic appreciation of it.

IV. Objections

I consider three sorts of objections to my proposal that in aesthetic appreciation we do and should heed a great variety of stories. The first is that such stories, if non-scientific and divergent from “common-sense,” tend to be either merely subjective or perhaps outright *false*, and therefore problematic. The second is that, in contrast to natural science, the type of stories I promote as guides to aesthetic appreciation are “cultural” and, hence, inapplicable to the appreciation of *nature*. The third is that these stories are driven by particular values, and hence distort the pure, aesthetic appreciation of nature.

Carlson mostly finds aesthetic appreciation guided by literary or by personal accounts inappropriate, for the reason that such accounts may only reflect a “subjective” perspective and not an “objective” point of view. Furthermore, Carlson dismisses traditional stories about nature that do not originate in natural science because he supposes that we do not find references to gods, heroes, and other “mythic” beings credible.²³

It is, however, beside the point whether a story focuses on a personal, “subjective” experience if it leads to aesthetic appreciation of nature. Similarly, it is irrelevant whether we (or any other people) find the existence of gods, heroes, or traditional culture figures credible if our purpose is to account for the aesthetic appreciation of nature. In other words, whether the entities referred to are credible is irrelevant if it turns out that such stories *do* in fact guide and mediate the aesthetic appreciation of nature. And, as we already saw, there is evidence that such stories about nature do mediate the appreciation of nature.

At this point Carlson may claim that, no matter what may have guided aesthetic appreciation in the past, appropriate aesthetic appreciation *should* be guided by objective, true accounts, and that therefore literary, personal, or “mythic” accounts are problematic.²⁴ In reply we may note that although some accounts, such as those that make the Earth out to be the ruined refuge of “fallen angels” and sinful human beings, in fact *can* subvert the full flourishing of aesthetic appreciation, other accounts, such as the ones mentioned earlier may enhance it (for the reasons given). Consequently, stories need to be considered on a case by case basis for the degree to which they highlight *or* obscure aesthetically appreciable features of nature. That is, we may want to consider stories from a functional point of view by asking whether the account under consideration will illuminate the object of aesthetic consideration in a new and fruitful way. If yes, then we have no good reason to dismiss such a story as inappropriate.

The second objection I consider arises from the observation that, in contrast to the stories of science, such stories as I propose as legitimate aids in aesthetic appreciation are “cultural” and may be appropriate to the appreciation of culturally molded items, such as certain agriculturally modified landscapes, but are irrelevant to a proper appreciation of “pure nature.” In other words, the objection proposes that in appreciating parts of nature, such as the Australian bush, stories, such

as those traditionally passed on by the aboriginal peoples, are inappropriate to its aesthetic appreciation because such stories concern the cultural overlay rather than nature itself.

This objection suffers from a curious sort of myopia, since it overlooks the fact that the “stories of science” are *also* deeply cultural since they arise from very particular cultural conditions (as were given in modern Europe), and serve very specific cultural goals (namely predictive and retrodictive explanation). The cultural specificity of science, as currently practiced, becomes evident as soon as one realizes that not all societies are, or have been, engaged in the project of developing science as we know it. Consequently, whether non-scientific stories should guide aesthetic appreciation needs to be determined once again on functional criteria: if they enrich our capacities to aesthetically appreciate the natural environment (pure or modified), then they are relevant.

The last objection I consider takes note that the productions of the sort of stories that I mentioned usually are driven by certain values. Stories such as Handke’s about Mont Ste. Victoire seek to give us a literary understanding of what it is like to be a twentieth century person who lives in a world richly “previewed” by his predecessors. Stories, such as contained in the poem “Santorini,” seek to bring about a lyrical understanding of its subject matter. Traditional (“mythic”) stories, such as contained in the account of Tjati, seek to explain how people fit into the land. In each case there is a purpose and a set of values driving the account, while science supposedly is exempt from this weakness since science only “tells it like it is.”

The illusion that science is not driven by values, though, can only be upheld by being so deeply involved in its world picture that one lacks the capacity for critical scrutiny of what science is. Science, just as any other human activity, is guided by certain values (its ability to furnish predictive and retrodictive explanation), which, in the case of science, are seldom questioned; science’s values, however, do not become any less controlling of its point of view for all of that.²⁵ And if so, then, with regard to the aesthetic appreciation of nature, the only question, again, is functional. Concerning any one story we need to ask, will this story lead to an enhancement of our capacity for aesthetic appreciation or not?

V. Conclusion

In his *Aesthetics and the Environment* Carlson makes clear that, among other things, he is concerned with showing that “the postmodernist” option, that is, the notion that *anything* may be considered aesthetically relevant if it draws attention to an aesthetic property, should be rejected.²⁶ If his proposal is understood as a claim to the effect that science, and its common-sense predecessors and analogues, are *necessary* for aesthetic appreciation of nature, then it would not be possible for many people, who lack what *we* call science or common-sense, to aesthetically appreciate nature. It seems evident, however, that many people, including the Aus-

tralian aboriginal people who literally see expressions of ancestral beings in their landmarks, may still be able to aesthetically appreciate those parts of nature.

If Carlson's proposal, in contrast, is taken as advice on how we *should* aesthetically appreciate nature, then his arguments would considerably limit, and at times hamper, our aesthetic appreciation of nature. My argument has been that aesthetic appreciation of nature is and should be guided by a great variety of stories from a diversity of walks of life and cultures because these enrich our capacity to aesthetically appreciate nature. While considering objections to my own proposal, I have granted that there may be some stories that in fact will diminish our capacity to so appreciate nature, but that those stories have to be identified case by case.

In general, it cannot be our aim, however, to restrict our aesthetic appreciation, without further justification, by the narrow parameters that Carlson proposes. It seems to me, rather, that the wider the reach of aesthetic appreciation of nature the better, both for its own sake, insofar as it tends to be a pleasurable activity, and insofar as it is a way to generate interest in the protection of what little relatively undisturbed nature there still remains in the contemporary world.²⁷

Notes

- 1 See, for example, the special issue on environmental aesthetics of *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998), eds. Arnold Berleant and Allen Carlson [Editors' Note: Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11, and 13 of this volume are reprinted from the special issue], and the "Symposium: Natural Aesthetics," ed. Stan Godlovitch, *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 33 (1999) [Editors' Note: Chapter 12 of this volume is reprinted from this symposium].
- 2 See Allen Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment: The Appreciation of Nature, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2000). [Editors' Note: Chapter 4 of *Aesthetics and the Environment*, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," is reprinted in this volume, Chapter 2.]
- 3 In the following I focus on the role that Carlson grants scientific knowledge, largely leaving aside the function of "its predecessors and analogues" since Carlson only grants the latter a "second best" role in appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature. In any case, as is well known, what is "common sense" to people from one society may not make any sense at all to people from another; hence, it cannot be a very fruitful way to describe the knowledge conducive to adequate aesthetic appreciation.
- 4 I here adopt Carlson's use of the term "story" as a neutral way of making reference to the diverse accounts that might guide our aesthetic appreciation. This is not to denote any prejudice either in favor of "stories" in the literary sense nor against unadorned, prose scientific reporting.
- 5 In this essay I focus on Carlson's "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, eds. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 199-227, reprinted in Carlson's

Aesthetics and the Environment, pp. 102-225. Other recent discussions of aesthetic appreciation of nature include Noël Carroll's "On Being Moved by Nature: Between Religion and Natural History," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, pp. 244-266 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 4], and Malcolm Budd, "The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 36 (1996): 207-222. Carroll shares my concern with alternative (natural science-independent) bases for the appreciation of nature by developing an account that focuses on our capacity to become emotionally moved by nature. Budd's discussion is primarily directed at an analysis of what is meant by the aesthetic appreciation of nature, while leaving open the cognitive basis on which one may come to this appreciation. Since these essays are only peripherally relevant to my concerns, I do not discuss them here further.

- 6 See, for example, Allen Carlson, "Nature, Aesthetic Appreciation, and Knowledge," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53 (1995), p. 396 and passim.
- 7 The importance of "participatory immersion" in the environment is stressed by Arnold Berleant in *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992) [Editors' Note: Chapter 11 of *Aesthetics and the Environment*, "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature," is reprinted in this volume, Chapter 3]; and Arnold Berleant, *Living in the Landscape: Towards an Aesthetics of Environment* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997).
- 8 See Cheryl Foster, "The Narrative and the Ambient in Environmental Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 127-137 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 11], who argues against "narrative," or theory-mediated, and for the "ambient," or direct experiential, dimension of aesthetic appreciation. Also see Holmes Rolston III, "Does Aesthetic Appreciation of Landscapes Need to be Science-Based?" *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 35 (1995): 374-386, who agrees that there is an important "participatory" element in aesthetic appreciation of at least one part of nature, landscapes, but falls in with Carlson in attributing to science the role of primary guide. He, like Carlson, overlooks the possible irrelevance or counter-productivity that a fixation on science in aesthetic appreciation may entail. [Editors' Note: See also Holmes Rolston III, "The Aesthetic Experiences of Forests," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 157-166 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 10].]
- 9 Carlson, "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature," p. 219.
- 10 See Emily Brady, "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 139-147 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 8], who argues against science-based and for science-unprejudiced, explorative approaches reliant on the natural, common faculties of perception and imagination.
- 11 See Budd, "Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," for a discussion of this issue.
- 12 See, for example, Rudy Wiebe, *The Temptations of Big Bear* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976) and *The Angel of the Tar Sands and Other Stories* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982); Peter Handke, "The Lesson of Sainte Victoire," in *Slow Homecoming*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Methuen, 1985).

- 13 Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book 5, lines 280-281.
- 14 Of course, there is a lot more that could be said about Santorini from the standpoint of natural science.
- 15 George Seferis, *Gymnopaïdia in Mythistorima and Gymnopaïdia*, trans. Mary Cooper Walton (Athens: Lycabettus Press, 1977), p. 61.
- 16 Seferis, "Santorini," *Gymnopaïdia*, p. 63.
- 17 Furthermore, if the visitor knew Érik Satie's musical pieces, *Gymnopédies*, there would be a further level of appreciation added to her experience, which, albeit quite indirectly, might guide her to appreciate the natural features of the island in still another way.
- 18 Carlson "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature," p. 221.
- 19 My distinction between artistic and non-artistic stories is pragmatic. It is based on whether the "story-tellers" applied the techniques and conceptions characteristic of artistic productions.
- 20 Aram A. Yengoyan, "Economy, Society and Myth in Aboriginal Australia," in *Traditional Aboriginal Society*, ed. W.H. Edwards (Melbourne: MacMillan, 1987), p. 215.
- 21 Paul S. Taçon, "The Power of Place: Cross-cultural Responses to Natural and Cultural Landscapes of Stone and Earth," in *Perspectives on Canadian Landscape: Minority Traditions*, eds. Joan M. Vastokas (North York: Roberts Centre for Canadian Studies, 1991), p. 20.
- 22 Also see Robert Stecker, "The Correct and the Appropriate in the Appreciation of Nature," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 37 (1997): 397-402, who argues that landscape paintings, for example, may be a resource and not a distraction from landscape appreciation because of our tendency to tack back and forth between art and nature.
- 23 Contrariwise to the essays listed so far, some also argue on behalf of the natural science-based approach. For example, Yuriko Saito, "Appreciating Nature on Its Own Terms," *Environmental Ethics* 20 (1998): 135-149 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 7], argues against "imposing" historical/cultural/literary associations and for "appreciating nature on its own terms," which means giving scientific knowledge a big role. Also see Marcia Muelder Eaton, "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 127-137 [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 9], who, in agreement with Carlson, finds "myths and legends" problematic because she supposes them false.
- 24 But see Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment*, Chapter 14 (pp. 216-240).
- 25 This is not to say that science can not teach us things that we want and need to know, but only that it is illusory to suppose that the activity of science is not value-laden in its own way.
- 26 See especially Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment*, pp. 218-219, and Chapter 8 (pp. 129-137).
- 27 For helpful comments on prior versions of this paper, I am indebted to the members of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Victoria, especially to Jan Zwicky and James Young; to Allen Carlson, who encouraged me to rewrite an earlier

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Environmental Stories: Speaking and Writing Nature

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“If a lion could speak, we would not be able to understand it,” wrote Ludwig Wittgenstein.¹ Here lies the difference between nature and us that is so difficult to bridge: Even if we were the same, we could not make contact. Nevertheless, we are used to saying that nature talks to us, or that it is writing a book that we read. Nature is listened to; it is watched; it is read. Our skill as a listener or reader is expressed not only by understanding but also by transmitting understanding and experience to others, as when by our own speaking and writing a story is created, a story about nature.

I. A Story about a Story

Does an environmental story thus exist in nature itself, ready for a skilled reader to read and tell to others? In an illustrative, metaphorical sense it does. Nor is the story only a text; nature is also a narrator. The first sense of the story—the story in nature, written by nature itself—can be seen in the following extract from Mark Twain’s *Life on the Mississippi*:

The face of the water, in time, became a wonderful book—a book that was a dead language to the uneducated passenger, but which told its mind to me without reserve, delivering its most cherished secrets as clearly as if it uttered them with a voice.... In truth, the passenger who could not read this book saw nothing but all manner of pretty pictures in it, painted by the sun and shaded by the clouds, whereas to the trained eye these were not pictures at all, but the grimmest and most dead-earnest of reading-matter.²

A similar situation of literacy and illiteracy is encountered when the writer of the environment is a person. People “write” environmental art and architecture, especially garden and landscape architecture, but they also write all the rest of the treatment of the environment, made by no matter whom, and no matter where.

Another sense of the environmental story is literal, the linguistic story that is created when a depicter of nature describes, interprets, and evaluates a subject. The

story has a dramatic tension. It has a plot that is based on cause and effect. There are “characters” whose actions are directed and explained by threats and fears, their life’s background, intentions, and goals. A humanizing language is used. Nature is shown as having a will and feelings: plants *suffer* from drought or are *stunted* by a lack of nutrients; they *reach* in competition with each other for light and for sufficient water and food, to be able to *keep well*.

Geography, “earth writing,” is a systematic attempt to depict the surface of the earth, a scientific depiction of the earth, which is also one form of environmental criticism. It strives for correspondence, for accuracy, for a mirror image in human language, in the “speech of the environment.” The cultural environment is easier to depict and understand than nature, because in it people speak and write to other people using agreed-upon signs. The signs must be known and the user must abide by agreements in order to be understood. The style, however, is individual.

The difficulties arising from deviation from such agreements are shown by the city of Hypatia, described in Italo Calvino’s novel, *Invisible Cities*. At the end of his visit to the city, the traveler has already learned to expect the upside down world familiar from folk tradition, when he climbs a mountain to board a ship, which really is a ship and not our “airship”:

True, also in Hypatia the day will come when my only desire will be to leave. I know I must not go down to the harbor then, but climb the citadel’s highest pinnacle and wait for a ship to go by up there. But will it ever go by? There is no language without deceit.³

What would be very difficult would be a world based on pure randomness.

II. From the Documents to the Arts

All depictions of nature are not necessarily reflections of reality. In literature in particular we create imaginary worlds from the material provided by reality by taking distance from everyday life, by means of alienation from it. In fiction, most clearly in allegorical fairy stories about animals, we project our own thoughts and behavior back into nature. Nature begins to reflect us.

A video by the Slovenian artist Andrej Zdravc is described as follows: “*River-glass* is not a documentary about the river Soca. It is a poetic river ballet to the music of natural sounds.”⁴ Moreover, reference is made to the stones dancing in the current of the river. Music, dance, ballet, poetry! The life of the river is seen through the arts, but it is not made into art, it remains a document. Is this aestheticization? The video is limited to the pure beauty of translucently flowing water. The idyll is not disturbed by human beings, not even at the end, as so often happens in this type of work. In films about bogs, for example, according to the usual story, the bog that has been shown as a home for animals is finally brutally destroyed by draining. Nature is good, humanity bad: that is the moral.

The limits of the document are exceeded repeatedly in another video, *Water Stories*, by the Finnish artist Harri Larjosto. To its narrators, water in its various forms is a central element in occupations such as sauna keeper, midwife, priest, dowser, and icebreaker captain, but it is also a pleasure to the skater, the observer of nature, and the swimmer. Humanity, with its work and pleasure, is the narrator. At the same time we encounter a world of beliefs and myths, from the spirit of the rapids to those of the modern aquaphile, the lover of water. In these stories, we not only hear myths; we also live them in surrealistic underwater sequences.⁵

Even a doctoral dissertation in the natural sciences can dare to exceed the traditional limits of scientific work. In one example, dealing with changes in the relationships with nature on Finnish farms, the main role is played by the sounds of farms in stories of farmers, “farm stories.” The farm too, not only its residents, has its own story and life, extending over generations and even centuries.⁶ In this way entire cultural phenomena have their own story, as art does—one version of which is told by E.H. Gombrich in *The Story of Art*⁷—and different peoples, and even humanity itself, have their stories.

III. The Book of Nature and the Human Reader and Teller

In the Aquaria Water Museum in Stockholm, Sweden, there is a “sewer adventure” with an environmental pedagogical purpose, which is described in the museum’s web site as follows: “Climb down into the sewers and learn to read nature’s warning signs: the effects of acid rain and eutrophication.... Watch out for the sewer rats down there!” The visitor sees the warning signs by looking at turbid water, from which life has practically vanished: Something is wrong. Even a doctor diagnoses a disease by first looking into the patient’s mouth.

Reino Kalliola, the leading Finnish naturalist and Finland’s first public conservationist, used the familiar and traditional metaphor of the “Book of Nature.” This book is, on the one hand, in nature, that which is read; on the other, it is a book about Nature, a reading. Even in its title, Kalliola’s trilogy expresses this ambiguity and ambivalence: a book about nature, nature as a book.⁸ Likewise, for example, the film (and its published screenplay), *India Song*, written and directed by Marguerite Duras, refers to the blues tune of the same name, which is used as the theme song of the film. But India, the country, can equally well be a song and Duras’ work a blues about India.⁹

In his essay “The Written and the Unwritten Word,” Italo Calvino talks of how *Homo sapiens* has become *Homo legens*—reading human. We can try to detach ourselves from reading, but “Our sight is programmed to read and I notice that I’m trying to *read* the landscape, the meadow, the stormy sea.”¹⁰ Writing, that which is to be read, becomes a method for understanding. We write about what we do not know in order to learn to know it. Reading is not simply the eye moving from line to line; it is above all a movement of the mind. As Calvino says:

Reading, more than an optic exercise, is a process involving mind and eyes, a process of abstraction, or rather an extraction of concreteness from abstract operations, like recognizing distinctive marks, breaking down everything we see into minimal elements, assembling them in meaningful segments, discovering all around us regularities, differences, recurrences, exceptions, substitutions, redundancies.¹¹

More and more, the world is transmitted to us as texts. More and more, it is also replaced by artificial nature, which is described, for example, by the exhibition publication, *Artificial Nature*.¹² At the same time as our living environment changes into an artificial environment, our literacy follows, and we forget our earlier skills, which have become mere ballast. A Finnish author coins the term “room person” for a relative of “reading person.” Room person lives indoors in heated and electrically lit rooms, detached from changes in weather, and only looks out at the autumn rain.¹³ This way of life leads to alienation from the language of nature, to incomprehension and helplessness. Nature becomes romanticized and mystified—and it becomes dangerous once more.

The difference between a depiction of nature based on correspondence and the construction of a fictional world lies in the fact that a documentary depiction is duty-bound to adapt to the way things are, to repeat the order of the universe in literary form, whereas we ourselves build the imaginary world, even if the timber for the construction comes from reality. The central criterion of the value of a depiction of nature is truth, a correct description; in fiction, it is primarily formal properties of a work such as *unity*, *complexity*, and *intensity*.¹⁴ It also may create interest, curiosity, sympathy, and like experiences in the reader. Between the purest forms, that is, factual and fictional texts, there is yet a combination of the two, the essay that articulates reality through literary ambitions.¹⁵ Thus, three types of depictions must be distinguished: at one extreme, the scientific, typical in the natural sciences, and at the other, the artistic; between them is the nature essay.

IV. Telling It like It Is

The means of depiction must be selected according to the subject. In her essay, “Appreciating Nature on Its Own Terms,” Yuriko Saito tells us to examine nature in terms of itself, without our associations, without subjecting it to models borrowed from elsewhere—for example, from art, literature, or science. Saito talks about the story of the environment and reading it.¹⁶ Nature stories are also emphasized by Jane Howarth and Alan Holland, the editors of the “Narratives of Nature” theme issue of the journal, *Environmental Values*.¹⁷

Is nature as a narrator the equal of humanity in its character and skills? What is nature’s intention when it tells a story and who understands the story? Certain purposes and goals are sought when reading the Book of Nature, thereby humanizing Nature. For example, the features of the landscape are seen as faces, in which the

traces left by life can be seen. We look at the landscape and it looks at us.¹⁸

If a story is about something “real”—the world—then we set the demand of mimesis, that is, of reproduction or imitation. A story of this kind must basically present the world accurately and as things really are. The story of nature and the various human stories must thus correspond, so that human stories aim at the essential in the story of nature. Nature speaks to us; we hear; and some of us, those most skilled in literary means, use our understanding as a basis for an explanatory and interpretive story, perhaps for the requirements of environmental education. On the other hand, when a story creates its world from “nothing,” there is, of course, no requirement for mimesis: the author is free to create the work’s own system of credibility, which is valid only in that world.¹⁹ This has a character that is very much an end in itself and is, in that sense, aesthetic.

Reading is an activity involving understanding: connections of cause and effect are sought, purposes and goals are seen. Even inanimate subjects are humanized by speaking of thoughts and feelings. A mental world that can be understood by people is created for animals. Those who keep pets and domestic animals talk about how the animal (typically *he* or *she*!) is *angry*, *longs* for something, *sulks*, is *happy*, is *ashamed*. The difficulties of communication are overcome with the least resistance in fairy tales and by humanizing animal consciousness in animistic worldviews. In our own day, comic strips keep alive the tradition of fables. Abstract pairs of characteristics, such as good and evil, nobility and low cunning, or wisdom and stupidity, are represented in traditional fables by animal stereotypes: the sheep and the wolf, the lion and the snake, the owl and the ass. The struggle between the characteristics ends in a lesson. Animals in satires, from the horses in *Gulliver’s Travels* to the pigs and cows in *Animal Farm*, are allegories for the human world.

V. The Story Crystallized in a Name

The Finnish sculptor Kain Tapper reproduces the manner of speech of nature in his own architectonic environmental art. The sculpture *Primordial Stones* (1985) in the courtyard of the University of Joensuu is interpreted by the sculptor as follows:

The shapes and multiplicity of parts of the work are intended to create an impression that there is an ancient rock under the entire area, the remains of which protrude through the yard slabs. I have tried to give the sculpture the character of an early human ritualistic structure. The boundary between the paved area and the lawn has been softened to also give the sculpture the impression of coastal cliffs or islands.²⁰

A name such as *Primordial Stones* or a placename is an abbreviated story. The name may be a reference to a story known by the members of a community or a reference to an historical event, which at one time, at least, was generally known.

Alternatively, a story may be later invented to explain an existing name; in folk etymology there is often precisely incorrect history.

The name of Skeet McAuley's photograph *Alaska Pipeline*, on the other hand, forces the viewer to look more closely at the picture to find the pipeline. The photograph of a birch copse turns out to be a concealed image. The name says what to look for (an oil pipeline), and the seeker finds it by penetrating an idyll. We see the contradiction between technology and nature.²¹

Just as with a name, a single event can crystallize a story. The locations where Olof Palme was shot in Stockholm and John F. Kennedy in Dallas gain their tragic significance through documents and stories retained in the mind. In the same way as ordinary places in both cities have become sights, an ordinary tree has been given special status, Hippocrates' tree on the island of Kos in Greece. In this case, we see in the mind's eye the father of medicine teaching in the shade of the tree. A true story has become attached to the tree; the tree speaks to us with the power of this story.

VI. Over-reading, Over-interpretation

A story can be made by intentionally reading more than what is justified by the bare facts. Paul Ziff, like Calvino, Kalliola, Saito, and others, refers to reading the landscape, but he also considers continuation and supplementation of the story with the aid of the imagination. This is the work of the reader of the landscape, which itself is only a foundation and a point of departure. But in this interpretive sense, this kind of activity can become over-interpretation; the story exceeds its bounds, arbitrarily: "One can read a blank piece of paper or a cloud or a sea-anemone as some read palms and tea leaves and entrails."²²

Kendall Walton writes of reading a story beginning "Once upon a time..." in the words written on a cliff by the waves, and that story can be gripping, exciting, and fascinating.²³ The story has a character in the same way as the profile of the face of the cliff has its outlines. In Gotland, Sweden, there are pillars of harder rock, which have been preserved from erosion by wind and water, so that one is almost compelled to see them as representations: *Hoburgen Man* is one of the giant figures. A human face has been seen in satellite images from Mars, leading to believing it the location of a cult of intelligent beings and to attempts to make contact. The head of Christ—both blasphemy and parody—is seen in an elongated pan pizza on a billboard advertisement in the United States. The finding of such representations in natural formations and in cultural products leads to mythological and fantastical explanations.

Even intentional writing can reflect the same kind of gestalt psychology. For example, names and even whole sentences have been written using plants. The plant does not, of course, know that it is part of a message. In field art or in crop art, a plant is one patch of color forming part of a picture.²⁴ On the other hand, a person waving a flag or forming part of a gymnastics group at the opening cere-

mony of the Olympics is certainly conscious of being part of a greater whole, but cannot, as a participant, see that whole.

VII. The Persona of the Author

I.A. Richards had his students read poems with the background information removed, without the authors' names and thus without literary contexts and without connections to the circumstances of their production.²⁵ When there are no names, there is no support for interpretation and no control given by the works. In principle, there is not even any information as to whether they are the works of a person, of natural forces, or of the chimpanzee Betsy. Even a story written by the waves is no more of an impossible idea than a Shakespeare play written by monkeys leaping on top of a typewriter.

Do environmental stories have a style? A style is typically bound to an author, to someone. Landscapes at least have regional features that are related to styles. It is possible to seek different landscape areas and landscape places, as well as landscape types. Depicters of nature, just like literary authors, have their own style, as do architects. Style comes unavoidably, even when not intentionally made. When a postcard refers to "Greece: Nature's Paintbrush," it refers to the maker's means and skills, to the use of a paintbrush, the successful result of which is the country's landscape. This is a case of the style of a fabricated author's persona.

A human author writes or designs his or her production and, depending on the nature of that production, is a career or version author.²⁶ Sometimes even nature repeats itself. And when it begins to repeat things, bored by monotony, it sometimes surprises us with a metamorphosis. We can speak of reading the author out, of constructing the responsible intentional and designing person behind the work, or more correctly inside and a part of it, supporting it. If an author does not exist, one must be created. This can be accomplished by personification: Nature *cures* and *heals* with medical herbs, the earth *feeds* and *clothes* with its produce, rain *refreshes*, the hurricane *rages* and *raves*. The author is in nature, is Nature, as it is traditionally thought in pantheism: not separate but Mother Earth to which, according to the Gaia hypothesis, we too belong as a part of her body. But by participating, we, just as the participants at the Olympics, do not see the totality.²⁷

VIII. Interpreters and Interpretations

What does nature tell us, if not about itself, its life story or autobiography? And by that it reveals the general laws of life. Nature does not gossip about everything or anything at all. Its speech is mostly a monologue, a lecture, or a sermon, and, as such, it is one-way. Of course, people also make speeches, for example, when they use renewable or non-renewable natural resources, when they humbly give thanks for insights and experiences, and when they give symbolic gifts. However, the dialogue does not always succeed. Difficulties of understanding give rise to contra-

dictions, not just between nature and humanity, but also in the mutual relations between people. Experts in speaking and influencing are needed: professional readers, environmental critics, environmental rhetoricians.

So how can we understand the speech of nature when it advises and teaches us? By reactions with favor, with unresponsiveness? The person who is dependent on nature, the forester or the farmer, responds to the stimulus. Thus a language is created and that language must be learned; reading and writing it must be practiced. These are cultural communication skills, the mastery of which expresses itself in life as survival, as a happily symbiotic relationship.

When Kalliola wrote his book of Finnish nature, or when John Muir and Aldo Leopold wrote their stories of North American nature, or when a lesser known Luke Howard, who “named the clouds for all countries, all peoples and all time” wrote his book, were they translations?²⁸ Is the depicter a translator and an interpreter of nature in that sense? An interpreter must be faithful, though his or her work is not mechanical: interpretation is also explanation.

Consider, for example, an author and professional forester who reads the story of the forest and writes it as a didactic book depicting one cycle in the life of a forest: Earth covered by ashes grows seedlings, the forest grows and flourishes. All the time a threat hangs over it; the process can be sent back to the start at any time at all. However, that which looks like death is the beginning of new life. This is the forester’s message: throw away unnecessary sentimentality!²⁹

It can be expected that a researcher of nature would have the best reading ability, if not necessarily the best writing ability. An understanding of the language of the earth is also expressed in the farmer’s suspicion of “Nature Protectors.” The former has wisdom based on everyday work; the latter’s is based on “book-learning.” The friend of nature, like all friends, is concerned about the welfare of the other. He or she is not a cool and impartial observer but is committed to his or her friend, thinking of its best interest. Already as a boy at school, Kalliola, the future nature writer, stated his dream profession as being a friend of nature.³⁰ Now in the words of the advertising phrase, “Nature thanks the friend of nature” for using recycled paper.

IX. From the Wonders of Nature to the Wonder of Storytelling

The narrative of nature never ends, but stories told by people always have a beginning and an ending. They have limits. There is inside and outside, that which is part of the story and that which is not. One can, of course, read nature, but as a story it is problematical. It does not have an outline with a starting point, a finishing point, and edges. Only in exceptional cases, such as the cycle of the seasons and when other cyclic phenomena close their circles, can natural limits be found in the story of nature. In other cases, we artificially detach selected pieces of the immensely larger story of nature to form sub-stories. Humanity as a narrator acts like empty picture

frames, which can be used to enclose any piece of the earth or any landscape at all.

Of course, people try to influence nature, which they feel to be stronger than themselves, by placation and flattery, by requests and demands, by blackmail and appeal, using the means of rites, ceremonies, and prayers. In a Finnish novel set in Africa, two cultures are opposed and compared: the lost way of life of the original inhabitants, which was based on a nature religion, with only rock painting remaining, and the western religion of technology. The original inhabitants relied on influencing nature, on listening to nature, and thereby winning its favors, such as rain. A connection between the two cultures is created by a rock painting of an impala doe, which comes to life. The image, just like the word, becomes flesh and kicks as much as it would in actuality.³¹

How many nature films and books have been made with the terms, *wonderful nature* or the *wonders of nature* in their titles? So many that the wonder has become everyday and banal. At the same time, anything at all ordinary has been obscured and so has become a wonder. It has been mystified without even trying to find a logical explanation. The idea of admiring wonders and the wonderful is dealt with by Ronald Hepburn in his essay, "Nature Humanised: Nature Respected." He suggests that an even greater wonder than the wonder of creation is that all of it is the result of random process. Hepburn's idea is clear, fresh, respectful, and appreciative of wondering. The result of random process is truly even more wonderful than the result of design.³²

However, the temptation to take the similarity between humanity and nature too far must be resisted. In some senses, nature tells; in others, it does not. In some senses, we are the audience; in others, we are not. Sometimes we try to talk to nature. In some situations we are left speechless. Sometimes the language difficulties are insurmountable. But even if the talking lion is inaccessible outside of fables, we nonetheless think that we can understand each other's talk about nature well enough.³³

Notes

- 1 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953), II, xi.
- 2 Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* [1883] (New York: Bantam, 1990), pp. 47-48.
- 3 Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1974), p. 48.
- 4 Andrej Zdravic, *Riverglass* (Ljubljana: Antara, 1997). The text appears on the case of the videocassette.
- 5 Harri Larjosto, *Vesikertomuksia/Water Stories* (Helsinki: Koskela Art & Media House, 1999).
- 6 This exemplary doctoral thesis is by Mikko Kumpulainen, *Maan ja talouden välissä*.

- Viisi kertomusta suomalaisen maatalan luontosuhteen muutoksesta [Land versus agribusiness. Five narrations on the changes in the nature relations of Finnish farms]* (Joensuu: University of Joensuu, Department of Geography, 1999).
- 7 E.H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon, 1950).
 - 8 Reino Kalliola, *Suomen Luonnon Kirja, I-III: Suomen kaunis luonto, Suomen luonto vuodenaikojen vaihtelussa, Suomen luonto mereltä tuntureille [The Book of Finnish Nature, I-III: Finland's Beautiful Nature, Finland's Nature in Changing Seasons, Finland's Nature from the Sea to the Fells]* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1946, 1951, 1958).
 - 9 Marguerite Duras, *India Song* (Sunshine, 1974). (A book; also a film with the same title directed by Duras.)
 - 10 Italo Calvino, "The Written and the Unwritten Word," trans. William Weaver, *The New York Review of Books* 30:8 (1983): 38-39, p. 39.
 - 11 Ibid.
 - 12 Jeffrey Deitch and Dan Friedman, eds., *Artificial Nature* (Athens: Deste Foundation for Contemporary Art, 1990).
 - 13 The term is introduced by the Finnish author Matti Mäkelä in his *Sääkirja [The Weather Book]* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1998), pp. 125-145.
 - 14 See Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1958), p. 462.
 - 15 Cf. Edward O. Wilson, "Introduction: Life is a Narrative," in *The Best American Science and Nature Writing 2001*, ed. Edward O. Wilson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), pp. xiii-xx.
 - 16 Yuriko Saito, "Appreciating Nature on Its Own Terms," *Environmental Ethics* 20 (1998): 135-149, [reprinted in this volume, Chapter 7].
 - 17 Jane Howarth and Alan Holland, "Editorial," *Environmental Values* 7 (1998): 253-254.
 - 18 See Yrjö Sepänmaa, "Face to Face with the Landscape," in *Koht ja paik/Place and Location*, ed. Kaia Lehari and Virve Sarapik (Tallinn: Eesti Kunstiakadeemia/Estonian Academy of Arts, 2000), pp. 11-20.
 - 19 Margaret Macdonald, "The Language of Fiction," in *Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics from Plato to Wittgenstein*, ed. Frank A. Tillman and Steven M. Cahn (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 617-630.
 - 20 Account given by the sculptor.
 - 21 See Charles Hagen, "Tricky Attempts to Juggle Esthetics and Politics," *The New York Times* 14 June 1992.
 - 22 Paul Ziff, "Anything viewed," in *Essays in Honour of Jaakko Hintikka On the Occasion of His Fiftieth Birthday on January 12, 1979*, ed. Esa Saarinen, Risto Hilpinen, Ilkka Niiniluoto, and Merrill Provence Hintikka (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979), pp. 285-293, p. 291. Reprinted in Paul Ziff, *Antiaesthetics: An Appreciation of the Cow with the Subtile Nose* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1984), pp. 129-139.
 - 23 Kendall L. Walton, "Review of Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art*," *The Journal of Philosophy* 80 (1983): 179-193,.
 - 24 Stan Herd, *Crop Art and Other Earthworks* (New York: Abrams, 1994).

- 25 I.A. Richards, *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1956).
- 26 Margaret Atwood, "Valgarsonland: Red Dust," in Atwood's *Second Words: Selected Critical Prose* (Toronto: Anansi Press, 1982), p. 321.
- 27 The classic sources are James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) and *The Ages of Gaia* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988).
- 28 See Richard Hamlyn, *The Invention of Clouds. How an Amateur Meteorologist Forged the Language of the Skies* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), p. 345. Hamlyn also refers to Francis Beaufort in whom "the winds had finally found their Howard." (p. 279). For Kalliola's work, see note 8. For that of Muir and Leopold, see, for example, Muir's *Our National Parks* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916) and Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949).
- 29 Veikko Huovinen, *Tale of the Forest Folk*, trans. Tim Steffa with Laura Mäki, et al (Helsinki: Otava, 1994).
- 30 Reino Kalliola, "Nuoren luonnontutkijan opaskirjoja 1920-luvulla" ["Guide-Books for a Young Nature Examiner in the Twenties"], in Kalliola's *Luonto sydämellä-Kirjoitelmia ja puheita 1930-1977* [*Nature at Heart; Writings and Speeches 1930-1977*] (Helsinki: WSOY, 1978), pp. 114-124, p. 119.
- 31 Ulla-Lena Lundberg, *Regn* [*The Rain*] (Helsingfors: Söderströms, 1997).
- 32 Ronald Hepburn, "Nature Humanised: Nature Respected," *Environmental Values* 7 (1998): 267-279, p. 278.
- 33 The first version of this paper was presented at the environmental aesthetics conference, "Nature, Art, Aesthetics," organized by the Finnish Society of Aesthetics and The Nordic Society of Aesthetics in cooperation with the Åbo Akademi Department of Philosophy held in Turku/Åbo, Finland, May 1999. The conference paper was published in *Nordisk estetisk tidskrift/The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 19 (1999): 73-85.

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