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Aspects of landscape or nature quality

Finn Arler*
*Department of Philosophy, Århus University, 8000 Århus Denmark. *Finn, Arler, M.A. and Ph.D. in Philosophy. Research Fellow, associated with the interdisciplinary research group 'Boundaries in the Landscape', sponsored by the Danish Research Councils. Teaches environmental ethics at the Human Ecology course at Aalborg University, Denmark. (E-mail: filfa@hum.aau.dk)*

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Abstract

Landscape or nature quality has become a key concept in relation to nature policy and landscape planning. In the first part of the article it is argued, that these qualities should not be conceived as mere expressions of private or subjective preferences. Even though there may not be any 'objective' or 'scientific' method dealing with them, they are still values which can be shared, reflected on, and discussed in a reasonable way. The connoisseurs are introduced as experienced persons, who are particularly capable of identifying different kinds of qualities, bridge builders between cognition and evaluation. The second part of the article deals with four central sets of landscape or nature qualities: qualities related to species diversity, qualities related to the 'atmospheres' and characters of places, pictorial qualities, and qualities related to narrativity. It is argued that experience of these and similar qualities are an important part of human flourishing, and that they should therefore all have a prominent place in landscape planning.

Introduction

My initial reason for focusing on the concept of landscape or nature quality is that 'nature quality' has become a key word in the Danish nature policy debate during the latest decade. The main purpose of nature conservation, nature preservation and nature restoration is at present seen as the preservation and enhancement of nature quality (or natural qualities) in the Danish landscape(s), and nature quality plans are therefore being made these years in order to establish a more qualified and coherent nature policy than has been the case so far.

These nature quality plans can be seen as a counterpart to the socalled recipient quality plans of the early eighties, which focused on the various emissions from industry, agriculture, and households. The purpose of these plans was basically negative, i.e., the plans should help avoiding unfortunate influence from human activities, especially on the most vulnerable ecosystems. The basic idea behind the new nature quality plans, on the other hand, is of a much more positive or constructive character. The point is to map out more explicitly the natural qualities which can be found in the local areas, and to preserve or enhance whatever qualities may be found both worthy and in need of a special effort.

As far as I can see, this change from negative to positive considerations is part of an international trend, reflected, for instance, in the growing awareness of the socalled 'natural and cultural heritage', or in the *genius loci* or 'sense of place' oriented interpretations of environmental ethics (cf., for instance, Tuan 1977, Sagoff 1994). It is also directly related to the international effort of preserving biodiversity which has been particularly strong since the adoption of the Biodiversity Convention in 1992. Instead of looking at the landscape either as a medium for productive activities, as a recipient for emissions from human activities, or as a container of remnants of 'authentic' nature which should be left as untouched as possible, there seems to be a growing interest in landscapes as reservoirs of a

series of more specific, recognizable landscape or nature qualities. Qualities, some of which may be highly valuable, e.g., in relation to local identity. In a situation like this there seems to be a significant need for more systematic and integrating analysis on what should be included in the concept of landscape or nature quality. Reflexivity and cross-disciplinary discussion is badly needed if this kind of landscape planning is to be more than a battlefield, where different interests and academic disciplines try to exclude each other from influence (Jones 1991).

In Denmark the nature quality plans have taken the more clearly (although still quite fluidly) defined concept of nature or landscape types as their starting point, mainly because this concept is already being used in Danish nature conservation law. Meadows and marshes, moors and heaths, bogs and fens, ponds and pools are surveyed and regulated in order to preserve an appropriate amount of ecotype diversity, and, together with this, as high a degree of indigenous species diversity as possible. I find no reason to criticize the caretaking of qualities like these (cf., Arler 1997). They only represent a limited part of the spectrum of values, however. Landscape or nature quality is a much broader concept, involving a series of other values and elements, which should also be taken into consideration whenever nature quality is on the agenda.

In this article I will try to do two things. Firstly, I will discuss the point of view from which nature and landscape qualities become visible, and where these qualities may be reflected on and discussed in a reasonable way, i.e., as more than mere ideosyncratic preferences. Clarification of this point of view is important, because of the varied conclusions which follow from different understandings. Secondly, I will bring attention to different kinds of values and elements, some of which lie beyond those included in the nature quality plans presented so far. It goes almost without saying that the list of qualities, which are discussed in this part of the article, is anything but complete. (Longer lists of natural values can be found, for instance, in Rolston 1994; Kellert 1996). I can only bring forward a few, but, in my view, central aspects. I will not try to make the definitive catalogue.

My intention is the modest one of opening up the discussion about landscape or nature quality to matters which are much too often left out in the cold, or which are only dealt with in passing. In so far as the subject of study in landscape ecology is 'the land, its form, function, and genesis (change)', including the visual aspect of landscape (Zonneveld 1990, 4f), and if one of the main purposes of landscape ecology as an interdisciplinary science is to 'bridge the communication gaps' between different disciplines (Naveh 1984, 35), without upholding 'the fiction of determinism' for human activity in the landscape (Golley 1996), it is obvious that this discussion will also be highly relevant to landscape ecologists, not only as scientists, but also in their work as landscape planners and managers.

Ethics and the connoisseur's point of view

The experience of landscape quality, or the coexistence with nature qualities is a central part of the good life. The presence of such qualities, whatever they may be, can make life richer. This is true not only for people who have already developed a more refined sense for the qualities, or who are open to the development of such a sense. It is true also for all those of us who strive more generally for a society in which a broad variety of qualities are preserved or developed, even though as individuals we cannot develop an equally refined sensitivity to all of them. In this sense, the preservation of landscape and nature quality is, if not identical, then at least coextensive with the preservation of opportunities for good lives for ourselves as well as for others, including future generations. Thus, the discussion of these qualities can be seen to be first and foremost an ethical debate (cf. also Seel 1991, 1996; O'Neill 1998).

This is the focal point of this article. The following discussion of landscape and nature quality is meant to be ethical in the oldfashioned sense of focusing substantively on the nature of the good life. By focusing directly on substantial components of the good life, however, I am immediately brought into opposition to at least two dominant modern views of ethics, which requires a few remarks. Firstly, unlike many utilitarian consequentialists I have no intention of presenting formalistic, or 'impartial' accounts on how to maximize the satisfaction of preestablished preferences of individuals. I do not consider preestablished preferences to be facts beyond critique; nor do I take the 'sovereign consumers' as my starting point. I consider substantial, ethical discussions, concerned with the features of the good life, to be of a reasonable kind, i.e., they are not just mutual exchanges of private emotions and preferences. Nor do I look on my fellow citizens as mere preference containers, but as sensible and reasonable discussion partners, who are willing to

be convinced by arguments. (cf., also, for similar critiques, Sagoff 1988; Norton 1987, 1998; Norton et al. 1998; O'Neill 1993.)

Secondly, I do not wish to promote a plan on how to preserve self-determination, understood in terms of formal autonomy rights for legitimate decision makers, whether it be property owners, local authorities and/or future generations. How important ever these rights may be, I do not intent to rephrase all ethical questions into questions of formal autonomy, as some deontologists ask us to do. True autonomy cannot be reduced to formal rights of self-determination; it involves awareness of the qualities at hand as possible components of a good life. This is true in relation to future generations as well. We cannot preserve everything in order to let future generations decide autonomously for themselves; we cannot avoid the question about which qualities are most worthy of our concern. True respect for future generations implies preservation of the qualities, which we find most important ourselves after thorough investigation and mutual discussion (cf., de-Shalit 1998).

The connoisseur

So much for negative demarcation. Let me now turn to the positive side, and ask the question: how do we identify landscape and nature quality in relation to the good life, and how do we weigh the relative importance of the identified qualities? What kind of answer can be expected to such a question? One way of answering could be to point to a specific scientific method, the use of which would bring out the expected qualities, each of them equipped with a specific importance value. This would be a very naïve expectation, however. Another answer would be to make a scientific survey of people's landscape preferences or their willingness to pay for this or that quality, even though most of them have probably never given it a thought previously. These surveys only bring forward unreflective prejudices of people, most of whome are not well equipped to make decisions about these matters, because they have never taken part in any relevant public inquiry and deliberation (Sagoff 1988). The right answer is: go ask the connoisseurs (cf., also Kiester 1996/97).

When nature quality is to be discussed in a substantial way, connoisseurship is likely to become a key concept, controversial as it may seem. A connoisseur is a person, who knows the qualities in a certain area well, who is capable of identifying them, and, at least to a certain extent, of weighing them against each other on a scale of importance. A scale, i.e., which has no unambiguous denominators, and which may even change in various ways along with the circumstances. This ambiguity, and thus the inappropriateness of rigorous methodology, is exactly the reason for promoting connoisseurship. Like the wine or music critic, the true connoisseur of nature qualities recognizes the qualities when he comes across them, and knows intuitively the relative importance of each quality, when seen within the appropriate setting. (A classical account of connoisseurship can be found in Aristotle's discussion of the experienced and virtuous man, *ho phronimos* (Aristotle 1961b). Cf. also the discussions of 'practices' in MacIntyre 1981, of 'internal authority' in O'Neill 1993, and of 'intuitive expertise' in Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1986.)

To some people, this focus on the connoisseur may sound ufortunately elitist, paternalistic, or even snobbish. There is a sound point in this criticism, and I shall return to it a little later. For now, let us content ourselves by pointing to the fact, that in so far as there is such a thing as a true connoissur, he must always find himself placed somewhere in the middle between two extremes. On the one hand, he cannot see his own work as part of an exclusive enterprise among the chosen; this would be nothing but a dictatorship of snobs, a distasteful thing indeed. A true connoisseur knows that he is fallible, he is attentive to the presence of his own shortcomings, and he is painfully aware that there is always much more to learn from other people with relevant experiences and observations. On the other hand, the importance of sensitivity and experience is likely to be ignored, if the fallibility of the connoisseur is used as a lever to the conclusion that there cannot be any reasonable sequences of deliberation and substantial decision making in the field. This would bring us back to the utilitarian calculations of preestablished preferences, or, to use a metaphor which (I apply mainly because it) rhymes so well with the one above, a dictatorship of mobs.

In the well-balanced middle between these two extremes, discussions are taking place with the purpose of reaching refined judgments of a certain kind: judgments of taste (in the broadest sense of the term) or, if this makes sense, judgments of judgment, the faculty, that is (Kant 1990, p. 39f). Taste (or judgment) is a concept which to some people appears just as controversial as connoisseurship. However, I see at least a couple of good reasons for talking about taste and judgment. Firstly, judgments about nature quality

are judgments of a kind which cannot be determined through some simple methods applicable by all, nor can they be deduced logically (Payne Knight 1805, pp. 18, 259). Their laws and regularities can never be phrased (Kant 1990, p. 17ff). Consequently, registration of landscape qualities cannot be left to surveying machines or to inexperienced beginners, who cling to methodological rules. It may not even be possible to express the premisses behind one's judgment linguistically, at least not all the way down. Without a developed sensitivity to the qualities of landscapes, without taste, i.e., one cannot identify and evaluate them.

Still, and this is my second reason for talking about taste, judgments of taste are *'mitteilbare'*, sharable, as Kant noticed in his *Critique of Judgment*. Judgments of taste in relation to nature quality are not circumscribed ideosyncratic preferences. They are not exclusively private in any important sense. Even though laws can never be phrased in matters of taste, we can still be sym-pathetic in the original Greek sense of this word. Judgments *can* be shared, and to a certain extent even communicated and discussed, at least among people with a common stock of experience – just as it is the case with the judgments of wine and music critics.

Experience plays an important part in this: just as the judgments of a wine critic are incomprehensible if you have never tasted (good) wine, and the judgments of a music critic are meaningless if you have never heard (good) music, the judgments on nature quality are incomprehensible if you have never experienced and never been moved by anything resembling the qualities discussed. You could not make judgments of taste, if you had to start from scratch. You cannot even proceed as a scrupulous observer, who registers things in a controlled and desinterested way. You need to build on experiences, which in an important way lie beyond your own control, experiences of qualities which affect you, willingly or not, as experiences related to matters of taste and goodness inevitably do.

Experience as such, i.e., the mere quantity of being acquianted often with nature qualities, is not enough, however. Experience must be qualified in some additional sense, before it can lead to good judgments. What is needed for this qualification? Once again, my answer is quite oldfashioned: what is needed is virtues. Virtues, in fact, some of which are very similar to the intellectual virtues, which Charles Darwin described in one of the autobiographical sketches (written to his wife and children in 1876, and posthumously published by his son, Francis Darwin) as his own primary qualifications as a scientist: love of the subject, unlimited patience in relation to careful consideration, diligence in relation to observation, an appropriate amount of imagination, as well as sound judgment when weighing a variety of possibilities (Darwin 1909). To this should be added various aspects of the virtue 'sensitivity', like, say, sensitivity to beauty or sensitivity to narratives. When connected to experience, such virtues form constitutive elements of taste or good judgment (cf., also Zagzebski 1996).

Let me sum up the argument so far. The question of landscape and nature quality is an ethical question; it is related to the question of the good (life). In order to identify the various features covered by the notion of nature quality, one needs experience. One has to be aquainted time and again with features which are likely to cause affection, and which sooner or later do affect, if one possesses a minimum of virtues like sensitivity, diligence and imagination. Without affection, nothing can be seen. Without the virtues, the goods internally related to nature quality cannot be achieved, and no affection will occur. Taste and judgment, the ability of making judgments on nature quality, is enhanced along with experience, if the virtues are present. Thus, the experienced and virtuous persons, the connoisseurs, the men and women of judgment and taste, are the right ones to consult, when nature qualities are to be identified.

Are the qualities subjective or objective?

The question which is likely to come up next is this: are the identified qualities truly objective features, or are they just subjective affections and projections? Let me note, first of all, that the qualities are definitely not subjective in any exclusively private sense. They are not the ideosyncracies of a gang of lunatics. As I have already said: they are sharable and discussable, even though they may not actually be shared by all, and even though the common discussion cannot make up for personal experience. This is all we need to know. We do not have be certain, whether they are genuinely objective in the much stronger sense, according to which the qualities would still be there, if there were nobody left to sense and discuss them. And frankly speaking: apart from a handfull of epistemologists, nobody needs to care much about this anyway.

Three important things should be noticed, though. Firstly, the qualities we are discussing are not instrumental qualities, i.e., qualities which can only be seen

as such because of some higher or primary qualities, which are already there before we face the landscape qualities in the first place. The experiences of nature qualities are autonomous in the sense that there is nothing else which they are had for. We may even go one step further and say that the qualities are not just qualities because of the joy of experience. It is rather the other way round: the experiences are joyful because of the experienced qualities.

Compare it with friendship: a friend is not a true friend, if the friendship only lasts as long as there is mutual advantage to gain from it. True friendship is an autonomous good, it is not there for the sake of something else. There *is* mutual advantage if the friendship is of the right kind, but it cannot be an instrumental advice instantiated by the parties in order to achieve this mutual advantage. In a true friendship the friend is not just seen as instrumental, not even to the good experience of being part of a friendship. He or she is seen as valuable in him- or herself. If this was not the case, true friendship as such would immediately disappear.

This leads me to a second point. Just like the qualities of friendship, the nature qualities, which we are dealing with here, are of the kind which open up possibilities for a good life, which we could not have been aware of without being confronted with them. Thus, we change our valuations as we become experienced, and as we reflect on our experiences. We do not just satisfy needs and preferences, which were there all the time. We discover new needs and preferences, reevaluate old ones, and change attitudes together with finding new nature qualities as we go along. Nature and landscape qualities are what Bryan Norton has called 'transformative values': they change our system of preferences along with our growing knowledge and experience (Norton 1987). Exactly this is what the development of connoisseurship is all about, and exactly therefore decisions about nature qualities cannot be reduced to aggregations of present preferences.

A third and last important point needs to be added, however. (This is a point, which the sceptical reader may have been waiting for for some time.) Just like in complicated scientific matters and in wine and music criticism, there will inevitably be disagreement about nature or landscape quality (cf., also Kiester 1996/97). Different people have different experiences, are aware of different things, and have different thoughts about the experiences. There are different kinds of connoisseurs. Just as different music critics may be aware of different genres (one knows all the fine and subtle nuances in the works of 18th century composers, whereas another praises the raw energy in punk music), different connoisseurs of nature quality focus on each their own particular spectrum of primary aspects.

The sound point in the critique of connoisseurship as being elitist, paternalistic, or snobbish lies in the refusal to let just a narrow group of connoisseurs determine which qualities should be protected or furthered in the landscape. If it is believed that the farmers, or the landscape architects, or the geographers, or the landscape ecologists, or the historians, or the landscape art critics, can claim an exclusive right to make all decisions with reference to their status as the one and only group of true connoisseurs, the idea of connoisseurship has obviously been misused. It has been misunderstood, too.

The variety of connoisseurship is the very reason why discussions and public deliberations are so important: the aquaintance with different connoisseurs can open our eyes to qualities we have not been aware of before, and they can make us rethink our own experiences and preferences. Differences and disagreements should not worry us. On the contrary: they broaden the horizon and force us to qualify our own thoughts and experiences. There are things to learn from farmers as well as from landscape painters or any other group of people who have developed a refined sense for qualities through experience and reflection. Disagreement is no reason for treating the different positions as mere expressions of non-rational private preferences to be processed in some sort of utilitarian calculus. Dialogue is a much more interesting alternative, even though formal and impartial procedures like voting may sometimes be the only way to reach decisions.

So much for meta-ethical reflection. Let us now move on to the nature and landscape qualities themselves.

Nature and landscape qualities

The landscape, however one may try to define it, is obviously full of processes, features and elements, which can be used instrumentally. This kind of use is what activities like farming, forestry, and hunting are all about, or shall we say: are mainly about. Collecting solar energy in its various transformative states, using the fertility of the ground, being driven by the carbon, nitrogen, and water cycles, harvesting all the diverse fruits of thousands of years of evolution, etc. These are the sorts of things which farmers, foresters, and

hunters have always been good at, and the qualities related to their business are as important as ever.

As long as human beings cannot live on stone and air alone, these are qualities which are bound to play an important role, we may even say the most important role in landscape planning. This, of course, involves sustaining the processes and features, on which farming, forestry, and hunting rely. Without a continuous supply of free ecological services, we would soon get into trouble. The focus on nature and landscape quality, however, is much broader than this. There are other features and qualities to observe, and these are exactly the qualities which shall occupy us for the rest of this article.

Biodiversity

Let us first look at some of the qualities related to biodiversity. As already said, these are the qualities, which have been emphasized in the recently published nature quality plans, although they are seldomly analyzed explicitly. Why does preservation of biodiversity seem so important? Let us put aside the instrumental reasons related to, say, protection of ground water or preservation of fertility, and just look at the non-instrumental kinds of qualities.

Two dimensions of the complex concept of biodiversity are primarily of relevance in relation to landscape planning: species diversity and diversity of ecotypes or nature types (or biotopes, or habitats, or ecosystems). These two dimensions are intimately related, of course, in so far as species diversity is dependent on the presence of a variety of ecotypes, just as the variety of ecotypes to a certain extent is defined by the wealth of species present in each of the ecotypes. Still, the two dimensions are also different in so far as they represent two different sets of qualities related to biodiversity.

The presence of a variety of species appeal to components of the good life, or to conceptions of the good life, which are different from those which the variety of ecotypes appeal to. A sense of both may be present in one and the same person, of course, and both kinds of appeal can easily be combined with a sense for usefulness. This is an old truth. In 1542, for instance, one of the socalled founding fathers of botany, Leonhart Fuchs, made the following remarks in the introduction to his herbal *De historia stirpium*: "But there is no reason why I should dilate at greater length upon the pleasantness and delight of acquiring knowledge of plants, since there is no one who does not know that there is nothing in this life pleasanter and more delightful than to wander over woods, mountains, plains, garlanded and adorned with flowerlets and plants of various sorts, and most elegant to boot, and to gaze intently upon them. But it increases that pleasure and delight not a little, if there be added an aquaintance with the virtues and powers of these same plants" (translation from Arber 1986, p. 67).

Still, there is a significant difference between the qualities. To a butterfly collector, for instance, the ecotype may appear mainly as the background setting of the particular group of butterflies, which has caught his interest. A sensitive person, on the other hand, who enjoys visiting different kinds of eco- or nature types (deep forests, meadows, heaths, etc.), may be quite ignorant about the exact number and composition of species on the visited spots. It is the setting as a whole which he finds stimulating and attractive. Let me begin with the collector, and return to the nature type lover afterwards.

A collector of specimens of species may be preoccupied mainly with the hunting itself, or he may be so interested in the practice of collecting as such, that he could change easily from butterflies to, say, stamps. More often, however, he is moved by the beauty, ingenuity, or strangeness of the species, and fascinated by the varieties which can often be found even within one single genus of plants or insects. One can, as already Aristotle noted some 2400 years ago, find something beautiful, marvellous, and unique in every kind of species, if one approaches it without distaste (Aristotle 1961a, 645a17-25). This is a point has been repeated many times since. Carl von Linné, for instance, warned against putting too much focus on spectacular species: 'Nothing is so inferior and insignificant that nature's all-wise orders and arrangements do not shine through it' (Linné 1978, p. 127). Or take the recent recommendation of Anne and Paul Ehrlich, arguing that one should not just look for 'conventional beauty', but also for the 'beauty of interest' to be found in species, which are 'amazing, fascinating and delightful' because of their unique features (Ehrlich a,d Ehrlich 1981, p. 38f).

On the other hand, it is no wonder that mammals, birds, and angiosperms have had a special place in the minds of nature lovers, or that showy insects like butterflies, dragonflies, tigerbeetles and stagbeetles have been studied much more intensely than all the smaller and less significant kinds of invertebrates. This is not just the bias of amateurs, but can be found among professionals as well (Minelli 1993, p. 87f). Just a

quick look on the more than 500 years old tradition of producing coffee table publications related to species diversity, or the history of artistic representation of wild species, should be enough to convince everybody that all species are not equal as regards human curiosity.

Some defenders of species diversity regret this inequality, which seems to distort the interest in biodiversity so that it becomes based solely on a 'Victorian-chocolate-box-top vision of wildflowers in the British countryside', as the British zoologist Robert M. May has put it (May 1995, p. 14). Similarly, the American human ecologist James D. Nations has argued (with some regret) that the most important reason for preserving species diversity is still to be found in the answers to the question 'What has biological diversity done for me lately?' (Nations 1988, p. 81). There is some truth in this: biological diversity is more than a wealth of flowering plants and strange or beautiful insects, and narrow instrumental arguments may very well still appear as the the most convincing reasons to many people (especially because biological diversity has done quite a lot for us, not just lately).

On the other hand, it would be wrong to deny the importance of other kinds of motivation (cf., also Hargrove 1994). One does not have to read more than just a few books and papers of those modern connoisseurs who defend preservation of biodiversity strongly in order to realize that their engagement is closely related to an admiration of what appear as little wonders of nature, or, one may add, to some feeling of relatedness to other species, the socalled biophilia (cf., Bateson 1979; Wilson 1984; Kellert 1996). The collector of beautiful, but dead, specimens may not be aware of this. But one of the most fascinating things about the confrontation with other species, whether these are trees or birds or insects, is that they display ways of being alive, which are different from our own, but still so related to us that we can comprehend their way of life, in a bodily sense, so to speak.

Even when the aim is to present facts and theories in the most cold-blooded scientific language, enthusiasm shines through. Ernst Mayr notes that even though it may be true for the physical sciences that science, in contrast to religious interpretation, has the great advantage of being impersonal, detached, unemotional, and thus completely objective, this is not at all true in the biological sciences. He actually goes so far as to call the engagement of biologists religious, even though for most of them it is a religion without revelation (Mayr 1982, pp. 78ff). In the more popular writings of the connoisseurs of biological diversity this, or similar kinds of enthusiasm is made explicit. Edward O. Wilson, for instance, frankly admits that it was a deep fascination of especially snakes and ants which turned him into a biologist in the first place (Wilson 1984). Charles Darwin recounts that his passion for collecting as well as his interest for natural history were already fully developed when he went to school. Plants, shells, and minerals together with wax seals, coins, and stamped envelopes were collected and ordered in a systematical way (Darwin 1909).

Most other naturalists could tell similar stories, although they often, during their scientific education, have been taught not to talk about such 'subjective' matters. One of Edward Wilsons colleagues, at least in spirit, the Danish tropical ecologist Karsten Thomsen, has recently summed up the bulk of these reasons as an appreciation of the awe-inspiring, wonder-full, informative and instructive creations of nature, of their beauty, complexity, uniqueness, antiquity, rareness, strangeness, variedness, and first and foremost: irretrievability (Thomsen 1997; cf., for similar arguments Hargrove 1994). Whenever such qualities are present in human products, in pieces of art-work, he argues, they are inevitably considered to be extremely valuable.

Atmospheres and characters

Let us now turn to another kind of quality, this time not related to the separate species, but to the place as a whole. Take, for instance, the following description by the great Swedish taxonomist Carl von Linné, in which he remembers an experience of nature quality. When taking a walk at the outskirts of a village he suddenly realizes what a fascinating place he is in, humble as it may seem at first glance. The closer look reveals a little Paradise on earth: 'whereever one looks, everything is green and refreshing to the eyes, wherefore the Creator has made the whole ground green: here flowers play in each and every colour, which excites and makes people joyful. The trees swing their leaves and whisper pleasantly in the wind, the birds join in with all kinds of wonderful songs, the whole regnum vegetabile emits a delicious fragrance. Insects swarm around in the air, and sit down here and there like embroideries, whereever one turns one finds the seal of the indescribable Creator. One must be made of stone, if one is not refreshed by all this.' (Linné 1958, p. 52, my translation).

There is no counting of stamens, no scrutinizing surgery on pistils. This kind of scientific investigation is of no relevance in the present case. We are not even told enough to know exactly which trees, flowers, insects, or vegetables are living on the spot. We only hear about the way each component contributes to the overall impression, each of them by appealing in its very own way to the eyes, the nose, or the ears of the thus upliftet visitor. It is the combination of elements, the place or landscape as a whole, which is of interests, not each component in separation from the rest. What is it that fascinates Linné? First of all, it is the 'atmosphere' of the landscape. The place is refreshing and paradisiac, he says, as everybody who is not made of stone can see and feel.

Atmospheres of different kinds, emanating from places of different characters, this is very much what we all seek and experience in landscapes and nature types, this is what impresses and affects us in places (cf., among others, Böhme 1995, 1989; Seel 1991). And their very presence is one of the main reasons for preserving a variety of such types, although it is often hidden behind more 'scientific' explanations. Places with different characters emit or express different atmospheres, different landscapes affect us in different ways. They appeal to us diversely, and we respond diversely as well. There is a remarkable correlation or correspondence between the characters of the places, the atmospheres we encounter in these places, and the internal states of our souls, our *Stimmungen* or *Gestimmtheit*, to use the German expressions (Pahuus 1988).

Compare, for instance, Linné's experience of the summertime atmosphere in an open meadow with the experiences one can get in a dark forest of giant trees. One may not be as easily affected as nature worshippers like John Muir or Ralph Waldo Emerson. One may never be tempted say anything like 'The tempered light of the woods is like a perpetual morning, and is stimulating and heroic (. . .) The incommunicable trees begin to persuade us to live with them, and quit our life of solemn trifles', (Emerson n.d., 381), or 'the giants become more and more irrepressibly exuberant, heaving their massive crowns into the sky from every ridge and slope, waving onward in graceful compliance with the complicated topography of the region' (Muir 1988, p. 95). But one must truly be made of stone, if one cannot sense the need for different words and metaphors when describing the atmosphere of a forest instead of a meadow. There is nothing ideosyncratic in saying that there is more solemnity and less freshness in places dominated by beeches or sequoias compared to the habitats of grasses and flowering plants.

Different sorts of features act together in determining the character and the atmosphere of a place. These features are well known to landscape ecologists. Some of them are permanent, like mountains and hills, valleys and rifts, lakes and coasts, and forests of *Sequoia gigantea*. Some are of a more temporary kind, like the more modest flora and fauna, always being in a state of slow succession. And on top of it all there are ephemeral features like those related to seasonal shifts, the everchanging colours and forms of leaves, waves and sand dunes, or the fickle weather phenomena.

It is often said that in contrast to the 'objective' – topographical, morphological, chorological, chronological, and ecological – features usually described (and interpreted!) by landscape ecologists, the impression of atmospheres as well as the identification of affective characters are highly subjective. If this means that somebody has to sense them in order for them to be at all, this is fine with me. I see no point in insisting on some independent existence. If pressed, I would even be willing to accept that a certain amount of openness on the side of the subject, a willingness to get impressed, is often a prerequisite to the sensing of atmospheres, at least to a more complex and refined kind of sensation. If, on the other hand, the point about the subjectivity of atmospheres is that atmospheres are altogether private and ideosyncratic, or that they are mere projections of pre-existing states of the soul, this is definitely wrong.

Pictorial qualities

There is yet another way in which a place or a landscape as a whole can be attractive. This is when we look at it as scenery, or view it as if it were a picture. The pictorial quality of landscapes cannot be separated fully from its atmospherical qualities, in so far as the pictorial quality contributes to the atmosphere of a place. It is a quality related exclusively to the visionary sense, however, and it has a couple of unique features, which makes it reasonable to treat it separately.

Firstly, whereas the atmosphere as a whole can be sensed from all positions, at least in principle, the pictorial quality is often best comtemplated from certain viewpoints. This is even reflected in modern maps of nature sites, where the viewpoints are given, from which the landscape presents itself in a particularly beautiful way. It is also a quality which have been used, sometimes heavily, in garden and land-

scape architecture. One of the best examples is the famous Stourhead Park in Wiltshire in southern England, laid out in mid-18th century by the owner, Henry Hoar II. When one takes the prescribed circuit walk around the central lake, one finds oneself at a viewpoint approximately every hundred meters, everything neatly arranged in order to enhance the pictorial qualities. The number of pictures, drawings, paintings and photographs, made or taken from the very same viewpoints around the lake during the past 250 years, are innumerable, a fact which clearly illustrates the non-privacy of pictorial qualities, even though they may not appear to everybody on an equal basis.

A second point worth noticing is that pictorial qualities allow one to keep a certain distance to the landscape. One does not get as inescapably affected by sights as is the case with smells, touches, sounds and tastes, not to mention knowledge of history, to which we shall return shortly. To look at the landscape only as scenery is a kind of abstraction, which keeps the sightseer free from other kinds of emotional involvement. One can browse calmly through the landscape from viewpoint to viewpoint, looking out through the tinted windows of an airconditioned car. One of the most extreme examples of where this can take you, is the Blue Ridge Parkway which runs through Virginia and North Carolina in the southern Appalachians (Wilson 1992, p. 34ff). The road was begun during the Depression as a job-creation project, and restricted to leisure traffic. The landscapes along the road were redesigned in order to enhance their scenic qualities, when viewed from the road. Land use was restricted to activities compatible with the aesthetical views of the designers. Poor people with ugly shacks and inelegant land use habits were even removed from the land in order not to disturb the pretty scenery.

Notwithstanding such extemes, pictorial quality is an important ingredient in landscape quality, even though it is a fact, that it may not be equally important to everybody. This brings me to a third point: the faculty of appreciating pictorial qualities is a faculty which is developed by looking at pictures. To the connoisseur of pictorial qualities, the landscape looks as if it were a picture in itself, and is sometimes, as the examples show, changed in order to make it look like pictures, the qualities of which are appreciated. It is well-known, for instance, how the landscape gardens in the 18th century (and Stourhead is, of course, one of them) were made with a sidelong glance at the arcadian or dramatic landscapes in the paintings of Giorgione, Nicolas Poussin, Claude Lorrain, or Salvator Rosa. In these cases, Oscar Wilde's famous dictum that nature imitates art has become literally true.

Historical and narrative values

So far, I have treated nature quality in what could be called a timeless way. The described qualities are all immediate here-and-now qualities. The encountered species were found to be beautiful or fascinating. The atmospheres were described as affective in an immediate way. The landscapes were seen as picturesque sceneries. These are all one-sided presentations, however, abstracting from the historical dimension, from the narratives within which natural phenomena are often read. Landscapes are always cultural and historical landscapes, comprising a series of hidden narratives. As Simon Schama points out in his book on landscape and memory, landscape is 'the work of the mind', its 'scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock' (Schama 1995, p. 7). When a historical or narrative dimension is introduced, however, the comprehension of all the other qualities is likely to change.

Let us therefore take a second look at the described qualities to see what may be supplied by the introduction of history and narrativity. Let us focus on species diversity first. The collector of specimens of rare or beautiful species may be fascinated simply by their rareness and beauty, and he may prefer to order them in accordance with these features. More often, however, he will order the specimens in accordance with modern classificatorical schemes, almost all of which are attempted to reflect the lines of genealogy. Thus, by this very operation the species are inscribed in the history of evolution. They may still be rare or beautiful, but they are also recognized as representatives of genealogical traits in an ongoing process. Or, to take another kind of narrative, they can be seen as constitutive elements of the ecological succession of the area.

Likewise, atmospheres can be sensed without any knowledge of history, when the surroundings affect us immediately as bodily creatures. But the introduction of narratives obviously adds something to the experience. When places are recognized as historical spots, as areas where impressive events have taken place, this knowledge supplies us with a new emittor of atmosphere. We see the place in a new light, sense a different set of atmospherical qualities. Narrativity, although of a slightly different kind, is also present in Linné's description above: the presence of God, the

seal of creation adds an amount of holiness to the humble setting. The old story of Paradise lost is read into the common of a Swedish village.

Quite similarly, the fact that an area has evolved as an undisturbed wilderness adds much to its attraction for many people. It seems to supply the area with an aura of authenticity parallel to that of an original work of art. An aura which, according to some of these people, is impossible to restore no matter how much nature restoration is done (Elliot 1995). However, one should notice, firstly, that one of the unfortunate (in my view, quite devastating) consequences of the last point is that humans are turned into intrinsically unnatural and inauthentic beings. And secondly, that the search for 'the healing wilderness was as much the product of culture's craving and culture's framing as any other imagined garden' (Schama 1995, p. 7). The wilderness narrative, often illustrated with stunning paintings and photos, is just as much a human product as (and often written in a language similar to) the story of Paradise.

Now, let us turn to the pictorial qualities. It is quite impossible today to look at pictures in an immediate or innocent way as if they were placed in a no man's land without any references to history. Especially the carpet bombing with all kinds of pictures in modern mass medias has made us look at pictures in a different way. We see references everywhere to the all kinds of pictures, which we have seen in books, in magazines and newspapers, on television, or in movie theatres. Large segments of the history of pictures seem to have deposited themselves in the back of our heads. We ask still more explicitly why a picture is made the way it is, what is taken in and what is left out, and we look for quotations from other pictures or indirect references to classic conventions.

It is no longer possible (and maybe it never was possible) to identify certain universal features the presence of which will make a picture attractive. Or, to put the case differently, and probably more correctly, all the conventional features are being used as well-known stepping stones to the exploration of new possibilities. This seems to be the case, too, when we are talking about scenic views. Some would even find that we have seen too many pretty landscapes reproduced (or produced!) in accordance with classic conventions to be still truly impressed by them. These avant-gardists tend to look for something new and different, and it seems more open than ever what could be accepted as new and stimulating elements of the scenic view. Classical kinds of scenic stimulators like old farm houses, picturesque ruins, or replicas of antique temples are no longer as obviously preferable to, say, well-designed wind-mills, motorways or maybe even high-voltage transmission lines.

The most important way, however, in which history and narrativity influence our understanding of landscape quality, is the way landscapes function as a medium of common memory. Thus, landscapes combine natural and cultural elements as a basis of local, regional, or national identity. Our understanding of ourselves is often closely related to the landscape of our home region (or community, or nation). This is the landscape in which we feel at home with all its good and bad qualities. Undoubtedly, we are all influenced by the kind of attraction, which Yi-Fu Tuan, in the title of his famous book, has named 'topophilia', the love of place, although we are influenced in varying ways as well as degrees. Our home place is where most of the important things happened in our lives, individual or common. This is the point of origin, with which everything else is compared. This is the place where we always find ourselves to be among the true connoisseurs. A fact which does not exclude a willingness to be informed of hidden features and narratives by connoisseurs of history, ecology, and geology.

Narratives influence our experience of nature quality. Sometimes in a negative way. I know people, for instance, who find it difficult to enjoy the intriguing features in the royal park at Versailles (not to mention the Blue Ridge Parkway), because they see the ugly hand of authoritarian power on every corner. In their eyes the Arcadian idyll is nothing but 'another pretty lie told by propertied aristocrats' (Schama 1995, p. 12). And I know of people who are strongly opposed to the restoration of heaths, whatever qualities this may bring, because they see it as a disdain of their ancestors who broke their backs cultivating the land. On the other hand, narratives can also improve our experiences and turn seemingly humble spots into significant places, loaded with signs and remnants of historical, evolutionary, or geological processes.

Some final remarks

The experiences of different kinds of nature and landscape quality are all preeminent examples of successful life processes, of human flourishing. They are not made or done for anything else, they are significant goods in themselves. In this article, I have discussed four different sets of qualities: qualities related to

species diversity, qualities related to the atmospheres and characters of places, pictorial qualities, and qualities related to history and narrativity. I believe that these are basic qualities, but I do not consider the list to be exhaustive, nor do I consider the short discussion in this article as more than just a quick taste of all the goods, which can be found within each of the described sets of qualities.

The presence of nature and landscape qualities is the presence of permanent occasions for intrinsically good life experiences. Without these qualities important life opportunities cannot be fulfilled. We, together with future generations, will live a poorer life if such opportunities disappear. We should therefore try to preserve them. Some of the qualities cannot be preserved or planned for, of course, as some high quality phenomena are too ephemeral, or too incidental to be subject to planning, or maybe even too dependent on not being planned at all. But there seems to be all the reasons one could ever wish to have for taking into consideration all those features which *can* be subject to planning.

This planning process should not be based on preference calculations. Preferences can be changed as experiences can be improved and enlightened through experience itself, as well as through aquaintance with connoisseurs. Thus, we are all permanently becoming aware of new qualities and view-points, some of which we may never have discovered on our own. The key to a better regard for nature and landscape quality is therefore democratic dialogue and deliberation with due respect to different kinds of connoisseurs, not surveys and calculations of everybody's accidental here-and-now preferences.

Hopefully, the presentation of public landscape or nature quality plans can be fruitful initiators of this dialogue. Landscape ecologists are likely to have an important part to play here, although they should be careful never to overestimate their contribution. I do not believe for a second that 'for any landscape, or major portion of a landscape, there exists an optimal spatial configuration of ecosystems and land uses to maximize ecological integrity, achievement of human aspirations, or sustainability of an environment' (Forman 1990, p. 274), and that we should consequently leave it to the landscape ecologists to manage the landscape 'scientifically'. 'Ecological integrity' is too vague a concept, there are too many reasonable human aspirations, and sustainability cannot be turned into an 'operational concept', leaving all values aside (Forman 1990, p. 264). This is simply the wrong kind of ambition. It is enlightening inputs to a common deliberative process we need, not promises of 'scientific management', based on 'operational concepts'.

Still, apart from their professional knowledge about spatial landscape patterns and about the forces behind the dynamics of landscapes (among which one must definitely count the appreciation of landscape qualities), many landscape ecologists have also developed a keen eye for at least some of the landscape qualities. These people must definitely be included among the connoisseurs. An initial sense for landscape and nature qualities may even have been their main reason for engaging themselves in landscape ecology in the first place. Often this sense has been put aside because of its lack of 'objectivity', but in the present situation, where the socalled 'post-productive' qualities are playing a still more important part in the development of landscapes, there seems to be much sense in bringing it back into the open, so that landscape ecologists can make their unique contribution to the common dialogue.

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