

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE and APPROACHES TO NATURE — Ecophilosophical Perspectives

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The idea of cultural landscape must be alluring to the ecophilosopher. The idea often evokes the thought of some sort of integration of the human and cultural with the natural, the land. The human contribution to the landscape is thought to be constructive and consistent with nature's own conditions and processes. The land and the things that are natural to it have in turn helped determine the manner in which the human or cultural element has manifested itself. In short, the idea of cultural landscape is often taken to be the idea of the landscape in which culture and nature meet and interact on compatible terms. Ecophilosophy views this kind of relationship as valuable and as worth maintaining in response to the present environmental crisis. For this kind of environmental philosophy, the preservation of the environment encompasses both natural and cultural preservation.

However, as a perusal of the relevant literature shows, people from different fields tend to have diverse views of what makes a cultural landscape special and worth preserving, depending on what is emphasized as the distinctive characteristics of such a landscape. Cultural geographers tend to see cultural landscapes as the results of land use and tenure; architects, archaeologists and ethnologists will often, relative to their respective fields, emphasize various kinds of building and different types of other human constructions and monuments as distinctive features of cultural landscapes; cultural and local historians are likely to view the cultural landscape as a visible aspect of a community's historical development; biologists and landscape ecologists focus on the character of ecosystems and vegetation as these result from human activity in the landscape (Jones 1988: 156–57, 1991: 239–41). Common to all these characterizations is the idea that cultural landscapes are physical and visible manifestations of the lives and activities of human communities. Such landscapes can be called "material cultural landscapes." A landscape can also be considered as a cultural landscape in a

spiritual or symbolic sense, on account of the significance it embodies for members of a culture, even if it has no visible, physical traces of human activity. Here one can speak of an "immaterial cultural landscape" (Schancke 1987, 1989: 80ff; Jones 1991: 230–31).

In this article, I will discuss the concept of cultural landscape from the point of view of ecophilosophy. Ecophilosophy, as it developed in Norway from the late 1960s through the 1980s, with the work of Sigmund Kvaløy Sætereng,¹ Arne Næss, and others, has both a theoretical and practical aspect. As the word's origin suggests, ecophilosophy is the search for wisdom concerning the global home, i.e., the environment and all the things that naturally dwell in it. Part of this search is the study of what humans and other things and nature itself really are, and how they are ultimately interrelated, or how, as Næss would put it, "all things hang together" (Næss 1989: 36). This is the theoretical aspect. But ecophilosophy would be inconsequential and trivial if it did not involve and demand evaluation, commitment and action on the part of every person. In its practical aspect, ecophilosophy is a rejection of the lifestyle and practices of Western industrial civilization, of its ways of dealing with the natural environment, and it is an attempt to discover and formulate the principles of alternative approaches to nature at the levels of public policy and of persons' decisions. In other words, ecophilosophy is the reconsideration of humans' approaches to nature and of the relationship of culture and nature at the levels of both ontology and ethics (Vinje 1995: 7–8).² Accordingly, the ecophilosophical discussion of cultural landscape must be both theoretical (or conceptual) and practical. The theoretical part is an attempt to determine what people might mean when they speak of cultural landscapes, and what the various conceptions of cultural landscape suggest concerning the relationship of the human and the cultural to the natural. The practical part is concerned with what sort of cultural landscape represents or manifests an ideal relationship of humans and nature, the integration of the cultural with the natural.

¹ When he took over the farm that had belonged to his mother's family, Sigmund Kvaløy also took the name of the farm, Sætereng.

² Arne Næss takes exception to this delineation of ecophilosophy. According to him, ecophilosophy is theoretical in its approach, whereas *ecosophy*, as in his "Ecosophy T" (so named after the location of his cabin, Tvergastein, a high altitude area in the mountains in the southern part of Norway) is practical philosophy at the personal level, in the sense in which a person can be said to have his or her philosophy.

I. Cultural landscape: broad and narrow conceptions

Despite differences in emphasis and description, the previously mentioned characterizations of a material cultural landscape as somehow modified through human activity can generally be classified as those according to which cultural landscape is understood in a broad sense and conceptions of cultural landscape in a narrow sense (Frislid 1990: 10–13). According to its broad conception, cultural landscape is understood in contrast to natural landscape, as a landscape or area "bearing the imprint more or less of human activity," or as "any landscape which is visibly influenced by human interference" (Jones 1988: 154). Conceived broadly, cultural landscape can be characterized as the outcome of an encounter between culture, understood in a general manner as human activity, and nature, without further specification of what the contribution or role of each in this encounter is. This way of conceiving of a cultural landscape is indifferent to the character of the landscape's development and the character of the outcome of its development. Thus conceived, a cultural landscape is a humanly-affected environment, ranging from the drastically transformed industrial and urban environment, in which the signs of human activity are obvious, to rural areas where human activity is not so manifest, for example abandoned farmsteads with adjacent overgrown fields and areas gradually modified over long periods of time by grazing livestock.

If cultural landscape is defined as an environment affected by human activity, then it makes sense to ask whether all areas on earth are cultural landscapes. For, as much research seems to indicate, human activity is responsible for climate changes and problems associated with global pollution. In that case, every area bears the marks of human activity. One example is that of Arctic areas that are severely affected by pollution. It would seem, then, that such areas should be considered as cultural landscapes in the broad sense. Intuition tells us, however, that something is lacking for such areas to be cultural landscapes. If this is correct, there should be some criterion for distinguishing between those humanly-affected areas that are cultural landscapes and those that are not. The traces of humans in arctic areas are unintended, and perhaps even unforeseen, negative effects of human activity. But this alone does not rule these areas out as cultural landscapes. Rather, these areas are not cultural landscapes insofar as humans have not been there to carry out the activities that have those negative effects, or

insofar as humans have not intentionally deposited waste in those areas. If this point is spelled out in terms of an area's or region's history, one can say that the polluted Arctic areas are not cultural landscapes in the relevant sense because their local or regional histories do not involve humans as participants, either by their physical presence or by virtue of some deliberate action or activity that involves those areas. An area could be involved in or be the object of a deliberate human action without humans physically being in that area. An example of this would be the deliberate dumping of pollutants by means of remotely controlled aircraft.



Figure 1. Thomas Cole (1801–1848). *The Oxbo* (1836).

In earlier uses, the term *landscape* has had various distinct meanings (Jones 1988: 153). According to one of the term's usages, a landscape is understood as an administrative unit, an area whose inhabitants are subject to an administration and its laws. According to a different usage, landscape is understood in a visual sense as scenery. Third, a landscape is an area that has a certain physical character, certain topography, determined by specific shapes or forms and their relationships. Thus, one speaks of a "hilly landscape," a "flat landscape," etc. In all of these senses, the term is used to refer to a physical unit, distinguishable from another. A landscape is an individual physical entity with certain parameters,

even if the boundaries are vague. It makes sense to distinguish between two neighboring individual landscapes. An example of an artistic representation of this is the American painter Thomas Cole's *The Oxbow* (1836, Fig. 1). The painting depicts two adjacent, very distinct landscapes: to the left, the undeveloped hilly wilderness, and to the right, the flat cultivated farmland. In regions whose topography has great variations, one can distinguish neighboring landscapes in a similar manner: looking in one direction, one might see a mountain range, mostly above the tree line; looking in another direction, one might view a forested area, perhaps broken up by farm fields or lakes. Then again, from a more distant point of viewing the area, the two landscapes may be seen as one.

From these considerations, the following characterizations can perhaps be used to distinguish those areas affected by human activity that are cultural landscapes from those that are not. A cultural landscape in the material sense is an individually identifiable area affected by human activity such that the area's history has had humans among its participants. For humans to be participants in an area's history, the area must be the arena of deliberate human activity. This does not, of course, mean that unintended or unforeseen effects of human activity are irrelevant to an area's being a cultural landscape. But such effects must be tied to deliberation which somehow involves the area. Furthermore, the activity that makes the area a cultural landscape in the material sense is tied to social or communal or collective practices, aspirations and expectations.

According to its narrow conception, a cultural landscape is a humanly modified environment possessing certain qualifying characteristics. A narrow conception implies certain conditions regarding the cultural contribution to the landscape, as exemplified with the rural landscape characterized by traditional agriculture (Frislid 1990: 13) or landscape characterized by ancient monuments or cultural relics (Jones 1991: 240), to the exclusion of areas that are highly urbanized or areas submitted to forms of agriculture and forestry that in a short period of time have drastically altered the land's biological and ecological characteristics. Typical cases of cultural landscapes narrowly conceived maintain ecological health and biological diversity and are somehow continuous over an extended period of time with the area's original ecological characteristics. Perhaps one way of distinguishing between broad and narrow conceptions of cultural landscape is to say that it is consistent with the broad conception that nature serves as a mere substratum, a recipient of human transformation, for the formation of the cul-

tural landscape, whereas a cultural landscape in the narrow sense requires that nature through its conditions and processes somehow be a participant in its formation and development. Thus conceived, a cultural landscape is an ecosystem in its own right. As I will argue later, it is cultural landscape in this sense that is of interest to the ecophilosopher, for it is a type of human imprint on the land that may well be consistent with an ethic concerned with the integration of humans with nature.

There may be a problem, however, with distinguishing between those cultural landscapes that fit a narrow conception from those that do not. Does the mere fact that a landscape has been drastically transformed from its original condition by human activity make it a cultural landscape in the broad but not the narrow sense? For example, are the coastal moors of Western Europe and the Lake District in England cultural landscapes in the broad sense only, since they are so different from the original forested landscapes? Or can they be regarded as cultural landscapes in the narrow sense, since they have been transformed gradually over a long period of time and have biological diversity and richness (even if their present biological and ecological characteristics are very different from their original characteristics)?

II. A normative concept: the value of cultural landscapes

Discussions in Norway concerning the cultural landscape often drift into considerations of it as something valuable and worthy of preservation. Different academic fields and disciplines emphasize different characteristics of cultural landscapes that make such landscapes valuable. The cultural or local historian may consider the landscape valuable for its manifestation or evidence of cultural heritage; the biologist or landscape ecologist will emphasize the area's biological characteristics as worth preserving. Others find certain cultural landscapes worth preserving because of aesthetic, educational or recreational values. Common to these approaches is the view of the cultural landscape as something valuable to the extent that it imposes certain obligations regarding the manner in which people relate to it. The underlying concept of cultural landscape is "value-laden"; cultural landscape is conceived in a normative manner. It is safe to say that in such contexts of conservation, one almost invariably speaks of cultural landscape according to a narrow conception: a cultural landscape possesses certain types of

characteristics by virtue of which it comes under a narrow conception and it would not be considered valuable or worthy of preservation unless it had these characteristics. In brief, a normative conception of cultural landscape is usually a narrow conception (but the reverse need not hold).

Perhaps the principal reason for the preservation of certain cultural landscapes is that they possess a certain identity value (NOU 1983/43: 26–31; Bull 1987). They somehow represent or embody people's identity at the local, regional or national level or as members of an ethnic group. From this point of view, the preservation of a cultural landscape is motivated by people's need to maintain a sense of identity as individuals and as members of a community. This kind of preservation helps maintain a sense of belonging, which presupposes the continuity of lives and activities of the present with those of the past. Cultural landscapes have an identity value and so are regarded as worthy of preservation because they provide meaning to people's lives and activities. Meaning, as I understand it here, involves an ordering or structuring of things that may appear to be diverse and even fragmentary in relation to one another. Such meaning makes things fit into a coherent whole and confers on each thing a certain significance as part of the whole. Meaning in this sense is much like "the meaning of life." A cultural landscape incorporates such meaning and so has identity value in that it provides a setting or context in which people can view their existence, lives and practices. When a cultural landscape's identity value is a reason for its preservation, the meaning associated with the landscape helps determine the manner in which humans ought to relate to land.

Not all environmental philosophy regards cultural landscapes as valuable in the relevant sense of being worthy of preservation and of determining obligation with respect to land. For some ecocentrists, any cultural landscape has less value than a natural landscape, which alone is considered to be intrinsically valuable. Robert Elliot and Eric Katz, for example, reject all ecological restoration as non-natural, as "faking nature," on the grounds that everything artifactual or cultural falls short of the natural in value (Elliot 1982: 81–93; Katz 1997: 93–107). In their view, any human modification of the environment is an exercise of human mastery and manipulation of nature, compromising or destroying its intrinsic value; any cultural landscape, being artifactual, has less value than the natural landscape. From the point of view of this version of ecocentrism, a form of dualistic ecocentrism according to which humans and nature are essentially distinct,

the humanly modified environment is at best a matter of indifference, as long as it does not affect the natural environments that are still in existence. It seems to follow for this position that the agricultural or rural landscape is not more valuable than the industrial or urban landscape. A narrow conception has no significance over and beyond a broad conception; there is no normative conception of cultural landscape as valuable in itself.

From the point of view of ecophilosophy, on the other hand, cultural landscapes should be considered and evaluated in a different manner. This kind of philosophy does not reject or devalue the cultural and the artifactual as such. Ecophilosophy developed as a movement concerned with both natural and cultural preservation. The increased industrialization in Norway after World War II required the damming of lakes and the transformation of rivers and waterfalls for hydroelectric purposes, drastically changing landscapes and in effect eliminating entire ecosystems. The movement that emerged in opposition to this developed the realization that not only was nature being threatened, but so were human communities and villages that had existed with their traditional ways of life for centuries. People in these communities would be deprived of the natural basis for their lives and economic activities – mostly the so-called primary industries, agriculture and forestry – activities traditionally maintained at a level consistent with the existing natural conditions. These people, and those engaged in the local trade and services in these communities, would be forced to move to larger urban centers and take industrial jobs and jobs in related services. The ecophilosophical movement saw this development as a threat to both nature and culture and therefore as an undesirable development of contemporary society (Reed, Rothenburg 1993: 22–28). For ecophilosophy, then, natural and environmental preservation includes the preservation of both nature and culture, or of culture together with nature. This philosophy can be regarded as a form of monist ecocentrism in that it sees value in the integration of humanity and culture. In many cases, the preservation of various ecosystems or landscapes is also the preservation of cultural character and diversity. In the terminology of cultural landscape, ecophilosophy favors those types of cultural landscape that somehow manifest the integration of humans with nature to the exclusion of certain other types that do not. At the ontological level, this involves a reconsideration of the dualism of man and nature that often seems to be presupposed for the conception of natural preservation as mere wilderness preservation.

Ecophilosophy views the world with all the things that naturally dwell in it, including humans, as a complex integrated whole. The continued existence of such a world entails natural biological diversity and regional and cultural diversity, and so it requires that all the things that are in it be preserved with their distinctive characteristics. Ecophilosophy sees the exercise of human domination and manipulation of nature, characteristic of modern Western civilization, as detrimental to these kinds of diversity. An ecophilosophical ethic seeks the integration of humans with nature. It calls for humans to abandon the attitude and lifestyle of mastery and manipulation and to adopt a lifestyle that coheres with nature's own conditions. From the view of the world as a complex integrated whole, ecophilosophy seeks to discover the values and formulate the norms for the behavior of the morally capable and responsible members of this whole. One formulation of an ethic of integrating humans and nature is deep ecology as expressed by Arne Næss. According to him, human activities or human habitation need not be incompatible with nature; only certain lifestyles are, especially those of people of the industrialized Western world (Næss 1995c: 398). The 8-point deep ecological platform expresses the idea that the intrinsic value of all forms of life, both human and non-human, and the value of the richness, diversity and complexity of life forms are normative conditions of human existence and activity (Næss 1989: 29). It follows from the norms of deep ecology that human activity and approaches to nature should be sustainable in the ecological sense as ensuring the richness and diversity of life forms on Earth (Næss 1995d: 464).

Although the concept of cultural landscape has received limited attention among ecophilosophers, it may be worthy of systematic ecophilosophical consideration. In Norway, the concept is often used in arguments for the preservation and protection of humanly-modified landscapes and places that are threatened by the pressures of rapid and sweeping economic development, commercialization and standardization (Jones 1988: 158). Ecophilosophy sees these pressures as phenomena of modern Western society, exemplified by modern city centers and commercial centers, that are opposed to both natural and cultural diversity. These are tendencies that ecophilosophers have sought to counteract from the very beginning of their movement of natural and cultural preservation. What Kvaløy Sætereng in one of his ecophilosophical illustrations has called a "living landscape" (Vinje 1995: 33) is a material cultural landscape in the narrow sense: a landscape in Nepal with a village nestled in between mountains, next to a river

flowing its natural course through the valley. Such a landscape is valuable as a manifestation of a way of life that coheres with the land itself, a way of life that is threatened, and in many cases obliterated, by today's economic and political development. Where human activity has affected or transformed the environment, ecophilosophy will be concerned with the manner in which this is done, how the area has developed in relation to its original condition of natural diversity and in relation to previous cultural characteristics. From the point of view of ecophilosophy, it makes sense to differentiate between humanly-modified environments, considering some to be valuable, as possessing intrinsic value, while considering others to be lacking such value. The preservation of certain cultural landscapes could be a form of resistance against the current development and its character of invading and uprooting people's lives.

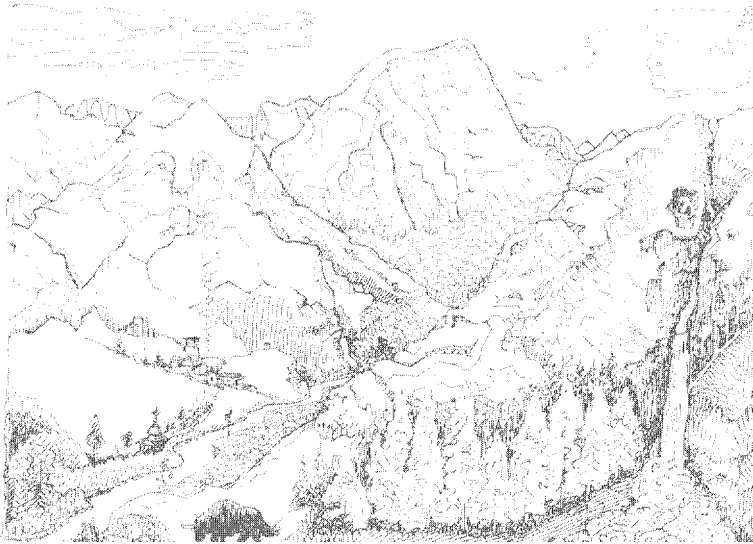


Figure 2. Sigmund Kvaløy Sætereng. *Levande landskap* ["Living landscape"].

Relevant here is Kvaløy Sætereng's distinction between *complexity* and *complication* as two categories of reality and of conceiving of reality (Kvaløy 1993: 122–24). Complexity is "the dynamic, irreversible, self-steering, goal-directed, conflict-fertilized manifoldness of nature..." Complication is "the static, reversible, externally steered, standardizing structure-intricacy of the machine." Complexity is holistic: the whole is more than and has qualities over and beyond the sum of its parts. It is the essential character of natural forms of life. Complication is

atomic: the whole is no more than the aggregate of the parts. Its reality is that of the machine. Complication is division and specialization of lives and functions: working life and leisure or play are essentially distinct; work itself is specialized in its procedure and goal. From the point of view of complexity, this amounts to a fragmentation or compartmentalization of a reality that is essentially one, a reality whose components are in fact ultimately integrated. Perhaps needless to say, ecophilosophy sees the world, including nature and culture and their relationship as complexity. The reality of machines cannot be denied, so complication is part of the total reality, but not the essence. This philosophy is critical of the prevailing view in Western philosophy and science as a view of the world as complication and of the valuation of the complicated over the complex. Accordingly, the sort of preservation with which ecophilosophy is concerned is the preservation of complexity. This kind of preservation represents resistance to efforts of developers and entrepreneurs, supported by capital resources and the political establishment, to make the world fit into some scheme of complication. To preserve complexity is to maintain the integration and dynamic reciprocal relationship of humans and land, of culture and nature.

From an ecophilosophical point of view, the distinction between complexity and complication can help distinguish those cultural landscapes that are valuable and worth preserving from those that are not. Only those landscapes that are complex or that predominantly incorporate complexity are valuable from this point of view. The concept of complexity provides some indication of what sort of landscape this is. The complex cultural landscape manifests and is the result of a dynamic relationship, the interaction of nature and culture so that the forms of human existence and activity somehow conform to nature's own conditions and processes. It is a cultural landscape in the narrow sense. Cultural landscapes are the doings of human communities, and human communities have originally been attached to specific places or regions whose conditions have been central to the determination of the community's character and its impact on the land. Rather than being invasive, the human or cultural element has been an integral part of the land's history. And the history of the human community, the formation of its character and identity and of the identity of each of its members, cannot be considered apart from the conditions of the land. The character of a small fishing community at a particular coastal location is to a great extent determined by the conditions of that particular location: the availability of certain species of

fish, the soil conditions, the presence or absence of forests, the topography, the prevailing weather conditions, and so on. For its survival, the community has organized its activities so as to be in agreement with the natural conditions of its location. All this has contributed to the character of the cultural landscape. Central to the idea of a complex landscape is the idea of place with its unique character and identity, as different from every other place. The landscape or the place is much more than physical characteristics and boundaries. It has a dimension that a techno-scientific description cannot capture, a dimension that gives it a special meaning to certain people: the landscape or place has a soul, a spiritual dimension, what Christian Norberg-Schulz has called its poetic character and *genius loci* (Norberg-Schulz 1992: 32ff). For complex material cultural landscapes, this aspect is a function of the manner in which human inhabitants have related to the land and its residents and the manner in which the land and its non-human residents have related to the human inhabitants.

Complicated cultural landscapes are physical constructions according to unitary, often single function, designs. The highway is constructed for the sake of getting from one location to another in the shortest time possible, not for the sake of contact and movement between towns and communities. Distinct from this is the so-called scenic road. Its specialization, its function as a road, is altogether different. In his *Discourse on Method*, Descartes expresses preference for complication when he favors the building designed by one architect over that designed by many, the city designed and laid out by one engineer over that which has evolved over generations, and the body of laws enacted by one wise legislator over that which has come into being through generations in response to experienced needs (Descartes 1993: Pt. II). In the complicated landscape, the human or cultural element is invasive. The history of the land itself is suppressed; the land and its conditions have not contributed to the outcome of human design and construction. Complication is detached from place; it has the potential to be the same everywhere. Contemporary cities, buildings, shopping centers and department stores are examples of this. Only specific coordinates in space remain. If, as ecophilosophy maintains, authentic human existence is complex, including a mutual dynamic relationship with nature and environment, then human existence in the complicated landscape must be compromised or unfulfilled.

As previously mentioned, different academic disciplines see values in differ-

ent phenomena in the cultural landscape, such as the value of biological diversity, the value of evidence of past land uses and management practices, aesthetic values, etc., relative to what they emphasize as the essential characteristics of a cultural landscape. Similarly, ecophilosophy must see value in the complexity of certain cultural landscapes. Complex landscapes possess or embody what can loosely be called ecophilosophical values. Some of these values are inherent in nature, yet should be realizable and present in the humanly-modified environment. For Næss, such values include the flourishing and diversity of all natural life forms and humans' relating to all forms of life through the realization of what he calls the "ecological self." Such a self can be understood as an *ecocentric self*, as opposed to the *egocentric self*, the narrowly defined and egoistic human individual whose goals are primarily the satisfaction of personal needs and desires. To the question of what it really is to be a human person, Næss would probably answer that it is to be an ecocentric self, a self whose identity involves coexistence with other forms of life, both human and non-human. Self-realization involves the human person's acknowledging this, and acknowledging that one's flourishing presupposes the flourishing of those other life forms and directing one's life accordingly (Næss 1995a: 226–27). Using this idea for the present discussion, the complex cultural landscape is the co-existence and integration of diverse forms of life. It is a sustainable landscape in Næss' ecological sense of sustainability. Such a landscape incorporates meaning in that it is the context in which humans understand themselves, their lives and activities in relation to non-humans and in relation to the condition of land as the conditions of human existence.

Also relevant in this connection is Kvaløy Sætereng's concept of *meaningful work*; the valuable material cultural landscape is the manifestation of meaningful work as characterized in the following manner:

1. It is an activity that is necessary for the human person's and group's material life, giving it a direction and practical seriousness not shared by any other human activity;
2. Its fruits or products (material objects and services) do not in the short or long run damage but rather enhance life (dynamic complexity both in the ecosystem and in human culture);
3. It poses such challenges that the potential complexity of talents and capabilities in the human individual and his/her group are brought to bloom;

4. It strengthens the individual's ability to cooperate with and his sense of loyalty to the other community members;
5. It is such that children and other social groups can contribute (Vinje 1995: 55; Kvaløy 1993: 125).

The value that a cultural landscape has by virtue of its complexity helps determine the manner in which it ought to be preserved and, more generally, the character of obligation with respect to the land. The preservation of works of art and of cultural monuments is typically an attempt to "arrest" them in some past or present state. This approach has also been applied to the preservation of cultural landscapes. Such preservation is concerned with maintaining those characteristics that make a cultural landscape the kind of cultural landscape that it is. Buildings are maintained, to the extent possible, in the state in which they were originally built. The preservation of the agricultural landscape consists of farming the land according to traditional methods, often with no real production value. When preserved along these lines, a cultural landscape is made to be a museum piece, a mere object of observation, as opposed to being a living and lived landscape. To the ecophilosopher, this kind of preservation fails to preserve that dimension of a cultural landscape which makes it valuable and worthy of preservation in the first place: the dynamic relationship of mutual influence that humans engage in with the land. From the point of view of ecophilosophy, preservation of the complex cultural landscape involves maintaining the inside perspective of the dweller and doer as opposed to the outside perspective of the visitor or mere spectator.

A complex cultural landscape has a history that accounts for its unique character. It embodies a distinct narrative, a story of its developmental stages and their significance. The story is about the reciprocal influence of the participants, both human and non-human, and their relationship to land. The meaning that the cultural landscape represents to its human inhabitants is historical; it is anchored in the narrative. Today's humans can relate to the narrative in either of two ways. They can, through their lifestyle and the manner in which they direct their activities, continue the narrative, or they can disrupt the narrative so as to discontinue it. Only in the first case is meaning preserved. On the other hand, there are different ways of discontinuing the narrative. Protecting the landscape from influence by present human existence, life and activity, thereby eliminating

the dynamic relationships between humans and the land is as much a disruption of the narrative and a failure of preservation as drastically altering the landscape's physical characteristics would be.

An ecophilosophical ethic of integration of humans with nature does not prohibit uses of nature, but it does seek to articulate the constraints for such uses. In the past, cultural landscapes in Norway were largely determined by the conditions of the land. The land was such in relation to humans and their capabilities that, in the absence of advanced technology or large concentrations of investment capital, it provided natural barriers so as to prevent complete human domination and disruption of the environment. Given today's technology, such barriers can largely be overcome. Now one should consider whether, given the concept of the complex, sustainable, cultural landscape, the conditions that used to be natural barriers to human development should be acknowledged as normative constraints. Indeed, the expanded range of possible human actions and forms of interference with nature and culture implies a corresponding expansion of the range of obligations with respect to the land.

III. Landscape and meaning: the immaterial cultural landscape³

The value and meaning of the complex cultural landscape, as I have discussed it so far, has a material foundation in human activity in relation to the features of the land. In some cases, this may even be extended to material cultural landscapes broadly conceived. Possible examples are old railroads, steel mills and other industrial plants that have been the lifelines of local communities and helped shape the character of human lives in those communities. Such constructions are, then, testimony to the past and have significance with respect to present meaning and identity. But it is not the physical area as such that has identity value and provides a context or meaning to people's lives. Some might even go as far as to say that the physical landscape is in itself mute and lifeless and cannot possess special value or meaning (Bugge Amundsen 1993: 84). Meaning and value are an immaterial dimension of the cultural landscape. Can such a dimension be acknowledged for landscapes that are not physically or visibly modified

³ I am grateful to Synne Blomquist for having brought the issue concerning the immaterial cultural landscape to my attention.

by humans, so-called natural landscapes? In that case, what sort of significance does this have from the point of view of ecophilosophy?

The conception of cultural landscape in contrast to natural landscape suggests that only humanly-modified landscapes can have such a dimension. In the Western tradition, nature as the object of science and technology does not speak. It is considered silent in the sense in which something lifeless is silent. To put it in the words of Christopher Manes: "Nature *is* silent in our culture (and in literate societies generally) in the sense that the status of being a speaking subject is jealously guarded as an exclusively human prerogative." (Manes 1995: 43.) If nature does not speak, it has no meaning. And if it has no meaning, it does not in and of itself provide a context for human lives. According to Christopher Tilley, the Western and capitalist conception of landscape is that of "a surface or volume like any other, open for exploitation and everywhere homogeneous in its potential exchange value for any particular project" (Tilley 1994: 21). The landscape represents few, if any, normative constraints on human activity. This conception of nature has a long and well-documented history in Western thought. In the earliest known Western philosophy, Ionian natural philosophy, the meaning that might once have been recognized for sensible, physical nature in its richness and diversity is transferred to some universal abstract principle, the basic stuff of all things (Arntzen 1999). Indeed, the philosophical project as such, *logos* as a way of understanding the world, as opposed to mythical thought, attaches meaning to the abstract and universal rather than to sensible nature with its diversity of particular phenomena.

Archaeologist Audhild Schancke has criticized the conception of cultural landscape in contrast to natural landscape. In her view, this approach has the shortcoming of restricting the study of the cultural to what can be observed as having been modified by humans; it acknowledges identity value and meaning in the relevant sense only where humans have left physical, empirically ascertainable traces in the landscape (Schancke 1987; 1989: 80–81). Such a material approach to cultural landscape fails to consider landscapes as being culturally significant that do not have traces of human activity. According to Schancke, such landscapes are also cultural landscapes; they are "immaterial cultural landscapes" or "symbolic landscapes" (Schancke 1995). The idea behind these terms is that the natural landscape can be as meaningful and central to the identity of groups of people or members of a culture as the humanly modified landscape, the "ma-

terial cultural landscape," is thought to be. According to Schancke, "a cultural landscape is not only a landscape influenced by humans but a landscape that influences people's views of themselves, their present and their past" (Schancke 1989: 92). Schancke's view can be taken to suggest that the normative considerations that hold for material cultural landscapes can also be applied with respect to landscapes that are not modified by humans. In recent years, studies of indigenous cultures, conducted by archaeologists, anthropologists, geographers and others, have focused on conceptions of nature, not merely land uses, among indigenous peoples (Tilley 1994: 22). To most indigenous peoples, the non-human world does have a voice and meaning. In such cases, there is a chance that the land somehow gives rise to normative constraints on human activity. Coupled with knowledge of land's ecological conditions, this can form a basis for organizing human life and activity in a manner that is in line with those conditions. In other words, the immaterial aspect of the land may well be the basis of both natural and cultural preservation. Schancke's considerations are motivated by her concern with Sami conceptions of landscape. The spiritual relationship that the Sami traditionally have with the land supports the general idea that human modification of the land is not a necessary condition of the landscape's cultural significance, for its being a cultural landscape in a symbolic respect. Among the Sami people, land that is not humanly modified nevertheless has meaning as an anchor of identity and belonging.

With these considerations in mind, one can distinguish three senses in which cultural landscape can be understood: the humanly modified landscape in the broad sense as any landscape that has the physical or visible marks of human activity, the humanly modified landscape in the narrow sense as a landscape where the marks of human activity are subject to the land's limiting conditions, and the landscape in the immaterial or symbolic sense of influencing people's views of themselves, of their history and identity, etc. If the humanly modified cultural landscape is a *physical* cultural landscape, there is a sense in which the cultural landscape not modified by humans is a *metaphysical* cultural landscape. Where the landscape by virtue of its immaterial or metaphysical dimension has an impact on the manner in which humans relate to land, the material approach to cultural landscape is likely to ignore cultural explanations of this, for example why certain land areas have, as a matter of conscious decision, been protected from physical modification by humans, or why certain land uses are chosen to

the exclusion of others, thereby securing the integration of humans, their lives and activities, with the conditions and processes of the natural environment. These considerations suggest that the idea of the complex cultural landscape applies to humans' relationship with the land at the purely spiritual level as well as at the physical level. With the idea of the immaterial cultural landscape, humans can be said to participate in the history of a landscape at the spiritual level. And the land, in turn, has an impact on human history. The idea of the immaterial cultural landscape is in agreement with the view of ecophilosophy that the distinction between nature and culture cannot be absolute but must be one of degree.

To the ecophilosopher, the immaterial cultural landscape must be as significant as a manner in which humans relate to the land as certain material cultural landscapes are. Although the manner in which people of various cultures relate to the land differs, it is perhaps safe to say that the spiritual relationship to nature, which can be characterized as a "benign view of nature," is typical of cultures in which a spiritual understanding of the world is prevalent. In that case, how can this way of relating to nature have any relevance to the Western human being, for whose dominant window to nature, natural science and technology, this kind of understanding was abandoned ages ago? Considering nature merely through the categories of science and technology precludes a spiritual understanding of it. Coupled with this, approaching nature only through the categories of economics confers on land mere economic value, to the exclusion of intrinsic worth. How is the Western human being in a position to acknowledge that the natural landscape has a spiritual or immaterial dimension by virtue of which it is meaningful and valuable independently of, and even in opposition to, narrow economic interests? And if one challenges the traditional Western way of conceiving of and relating to nature, as ecophilosophy does, how does one avoid the charge that nature is a social construction so that, according to a strong version of constructivism, there is no nature in the objective sense and therefore no way of relating to the land that is more authentic than others (Peterson 1999: 341ff; Smith 1999: 360–62)?

A Crow Indian elder, as quoted by Gary Snyder, gives us some hope: "... I think if people stay somewhere long enough – even white people – the spirits will begin to speak to them. It's the power of the spirits coming up from the land. The spirits and the old powers aren't lost, they just need people to be around long enough and the spirits will begin to influence them." (Snyder 1990:

39.) Within ecophilosophy, gestalt ontology as formulated by Næss is an attempt to show that persons' spontaneous experiences of reality, their intimate perceptions of concrete things, have primacy over, are epistemically more authentic than, abstract scientific representations of the world (Næss 1995b). Spontaneous experiences are pre-reflective and pre-analytic experiences. They are gestalts, ways in which things present themselves to the perceiver, which scientific discourse does not recognize: landscapes are melancholic, valleys are dramatic, birds are joyful, meadows are tranquil, etc. According to Næss, secondary qualities, such as colors and sounds (or silence), and the so-called tertiary qualities, e.g. the quality of being melancholic, are as descriptive of reality as the measurable primary qualities are thought to be (Næss 1989: 51ff). How a person spontaneously experiences a thing is in part a function of that person's previous experience and sentiments. Thus, there are as many distinct experiences of Hallingskarvet, a mountain in Norway, to use Næss' own example, as there are people experiencing it. Nevertheless, people can converse about the mountain and agree that they have been to the same places on the mountain by pointing to coordinates on a map. The gestalts, the spontaneous experiences, are the *concrete contents* that make up reality. Here, the whole is greater than the parts; the parts themselves have no significance apart from their relations to other parts and to the whole. The representations of things by means of maps, coordinates and other conceptual tools are *abstract structures*. This is the level of reflection and analysis where a whole can be understood in terms of its parts. Gestalt ontology can help explain how it is that a forest is regarded as more than the aggregate of trees and plants, so that constructing a road through the forest is not to take out a small part of the forest, while the forest itself remains essentially intact, but to violate the forest as such. And gestalt ontology is the claim that spontaneous experiences are the authentic epistemic way of approaching the environment. Furthermore, Næss claims, "so-called mythic thought is gestalt thought" (Næss 1989: 61). In that case, since this is the kind of thinking that acknowledges the spiritual dimension of the land, gestalt ontology as formulated by Næss can be regarded as one attempt to recover and articulate the voices of the land. Here, humans' relationship to the land as spiritual and meaningful in itself is not a historical stage that has been overcome in the Western tradition, but a condition of humans' relating to the world that this tradition has largely suppressed.

Contemporary environmental aesthetics can also help articulate our acknowledgement of the spiritual dimension of land, the meaning of landscapes. It is generally agreed that the account of the aesthetic appreciation of nature should shift from a contemplative object-oriented approach, a sort of outside perspective, to one of active participation or engagement in the environment, an inside perspective (Carroll 1993: 251; Berleant 1992: 10). In this respect, the aesthetics of environment resembles that of interior architecture and design, according to which things are not considered as the objects of appreciation at a distance but are regarded as parts of settings that frame our lives and activities. For environmental aesthetics, this is a shift away from a detached "scenic view" of nature and landscapes to a view for which the idea of being in the land is central. Rather than viewing visual perception as the primary access to the experience of aesthetic qualities, environmental aesthetics acknowledges that qualities are as much felt or sensed in various ways. What sorts of characteristics of nature are sensed and appreciated in an aesthetically relevant manner? What are the occasions and circumstances of aesthetic experiences? Noël Carroll describes an instance of "being moved by nature," such as standing under a thundering waterfall, being excited by its grandeur (Carroll 1993: 245). Arnold Berleant describes a paddle on the Bantam River (in Connecticut) which includes attention to the details of textures, colors, shades and sounds of things encountered: plants, animals, etc. (Berleant 1992: 29–34). Such experiences defy scientific analysis or abstract representation. One limitation, however, is that the aesthetic encounters described in much of the literature on environmental aesthetics are visitors' encounters. They are the kinds of experiences that people will seek out for a limited period of time. They are a part of leisure activities, not a constant dimension of human life in general. In this respect, environmental aesthetics is not so different from the aesthetics of art in museum and gallery exhibitions. As indicated by the Crow elder, acknowledging the spiritual dimension of land requires a more stable and enduring encounter with nature. For this reason, there is a need for a shift from the *visitor perspective* to the *dweller perspective*. An ecophilosophical conception of complex cultural landscape presupposes the dweller perspective for the integration of humans with nature.

IV. Concluding remarks

I have tried to indicate the sense in which the idea of cultural landscape might be significant to ecophilosophy. Some cultural landscapes are in their histories and characteristics manifestations of the integration of humans and nature, of a dynamic reciprocal relationship of humans and the land. Using Kvaløy Sætereng's *complexity–complication* distinction, I have called such landscapes "complex cultural landscapes." The influence or significance of such landscapes for humans and their communities is not confined to the material or physical level. As Schancke has pointed out, many landscapes have cultural significance and so provide a context for and determine humans and their activities even if humans have not physically modified them. Such immaterial cultural landscapes can also be considered as complex cultural landscapes insofar as they are elements of dynamic, reciprocal relationships of humans to the land.

Traditionally, the preservation of certain cultural landscapes resembles the preservation of works of art and cultural monuments. Such preservation seeks to maintain the object in a fixed past or present state, much like a museum piece. From the point of view of ecophilosophy, the normative implication of the concept of complex cultural landscape must be different. Here, preservation must amount to maintaining the dynamic relationship of humans to land, to continuing their shared history of interaction and reciprocal influence. For the human participants in a landscape's history, this amounts to a requirement concerning lifestyle: that humans organize their lives and work to sustain themselves in a manner that is in agreement with and acknowledges the land and the diversity of resident forms of life.

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