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Recovering Landscape and Landscape Beauty in Environmental Aesthetics

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Abstract

In this article, I will pin down some elements to recover the concept of landscape in the context of environmental aesthetics. Such insertion of landscape in environmental aesthetics entails the questioning of the dualism between nature and culture that still lays at the basis of much literature in environmental aesthetics. My argument will unfold in three steps: first, I will show how the original question of environmental aesthetics, as elaborated by Ronald Hepburn in 1966, presupposes a distinction between nature and culture rooted in the moral contempt for excessive modernization and urbanization. Second, I will criticize some theories, not all coming from environmental aesthetics, according to which landscape is reducible to the cultural codes of the vision in the scopic regime of modernity and pave the way for the rediscovery of the substantive nature of landscape. Third, I will discuss some elements of a substantive account of landscape by adopting a phenomenological framework and following authors like Kenneth Olwig and Arnold Berleant. In this last

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part, I will also offer some arguments for overcoming the idea according to which landscape beauty only results into compositional, pictorial harmony among its elements. The quest for landscape beauty can still play a key part in aesthetic appreciation and also in architecture and planning, but the kind of harmony to which it refers does not entirely belong to the sphere of the visible and includes reference to ecological, socio-political, and aesthetical balances at the same time.

Key Words

aesthetics; beauty; culture; environment; landscape; nature

1. Environmental aesthetics and the moralization of nature

The original act of environmental aesthetics is the retrieval of the idea of natural beauty after 150 years of obliteration in aesthetics and art criticism.[1] Ronald Hepburn's endeavor involves two concepts laden with semantic ambiguity and theoretical intractability: nature and beauty. Both have been considered outmoded in the academic discourse of aesthetics, as remarked by Hepburn. Yet, both 'beautiful' and 'natural' are omnipresent terms in everyday conversation: everyone continues to use them, everyone believes they know exactly what they mean. Tied together, they denote a quite antagonistic concept, the scope of which is defined in opposition to natural ugliness (the "unscenic nature" of Yuriko Saito),[2] artificial beauty (artworks and design), artificial ugliness (often associated to moral and political evil[3]). Intuitively, we use the nature/artifice distinction in order to communicate about some elements of our living world in social life. Similarly, in our everyday experience, we all are equipped with some ideas about the beautiful and the ugly. These categories bear witness of our affections and entanglements in the world and play a major role in our ways of making sense of it. Despite the semantic complexities and historical contradictions of the concepts of nature and beauty, their relevance for experience is hardly deniable.

By retrieving the issue of natural beauty, Hepburn aims to restore the original sense of aesthetics as the inquiry on the sensuous interrelations between the subject and the world; in order to do so, he diverts attention from the field

of art, understood as the sphere of the artificial, characterized by “frameworks and boundaries.”[4] On closer inspection, Hepburn’s pioneering step into contemporary environmental aesthetics belongs to the history of the modern idea of nature as opposed to culture. In this argumentative context, culture takes on the negative meanings of artificiality, prejudice, and constraints. The moralization of nature is a way to escape and criticize a social reality characterized by the increasing spread of megacities to the detriment of the countryside, the persisting impact of industry on natural resources, and any kind of environmental harms. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Henry David Thoreau, and Erazim Kohák can be counted among the representatives of this strand of thought, in different centuries and nations. In their positions, a moral value is attached to nature: the beautiful is the sensible mark of the good.[5] According to this interpretation, environmental aesthetics and environmental ethics are cognate areas of research animated by a similar attitude. Rousseau, Thoreau, Kohák, and Hepburn[6] embraced, more or less explicitly, a transcendental view of nature,[7] against a modernity felt as increasingly inhabitable and alienating. This stance is not necessarily shared by all those who work in environmental aesthetics and ethics nowadays. One element, however, appears in almost all theories developed in the framework of these disciplines: the conceptual separation between nature and culture. Albeit intuitive and phenomenologically relevant, this separation is ontologically questionable. Today, in the Anthropocene, to speak of a sharp division between an allegedly natural dimension of the world and the sphere of human action and technology may sound outdated. Moreover, the dualism of nature and culture makes it impossible to understand other experiential givens such as landscape, where nature and culture are melded together in ways that resist prior separation. And yet, staying true to that dualism, environmental aesthetics has largely expunged the concept of landscape from its scope; traced back to the sphere of the artistic, in some theoretical approaches landscape has simply been dismissed as a way of seeing and framing nature as art, that is, a way to mistake nature. There is also a specific aesthetic consequence of such separation between nature and culture: that the question of beauty and, more generally, of aesthetic appreciation splits into two different questions, one concerning the correct appreciation of a work of art and one concerning the aesthetic appraisal of natural

objects. By adopting a prior distinction between nature and culture, there remains little room for the aesthetic appraisal of contexts, atmospheres, and environments. Potentially, the dualism of nature and culture ends up suffocating the very ambition of environmental aesthetics, that of vindicating the aesthetic character of our relationships not to this or that object of the world but to the world itself, understood spatially and even geographically as a terrestrial world articulated in landscapes.

2. Environmental aesthetics and the dualism of nature and culture

Ronald Hepburn's work in environmental aesthetics is grounded on prior distinction between nature and art. By denouncing the overemphasis on art in modern aesthetics, the author raises the question: "How does an aesthetic appreciation of nature differ from an appreciation of artworks?"[8] Emily Brady formulates the issue as follows: "What guides aesthetic appreciation of nature in the absence of art history, knowledge of artistic intention, and the conventions that govern the judgement of artworks?"[9] According to the perspective from which Hepburn's and Brady's questions are put, the overlapping areas between appreciation of nature and the appraisal of artworks must eventually stem from conceptual unclarity and experiential confusion that must be dispelled to attain a higher degree of awareness on how proper aesthetic appreciation works.[10] Hepburn and Brady's questions are disputable: the assumption that aesthetic appreciation of nature may, or even must, be formed "in the absence of art history and the conventions that govern the judgement of artworks" should be duly substantiated. As a matter of fact, one can argue the exact opposite.

Already Alexander von Humboldt stressed the importance of cultural representations to get acquainted with nature. [11] Humboldt proposed to consider the history of the representations of nature as the history of the human encounter with nature, understood as a substantive, relatively autonomous, and self-expressive entity. In other words, cultural representations of nature are not supposed to "invent" or "recreate" it according to some representational construction; rather, they bear witness to the efforts of cultures to get acquainted with nature, to know it better. Yet, it is impossible to approach nature without cultural representations. The history of the

concepts of picturesque and sublime, the history of the aestheticization of items such as mountains and deserts, and the history of spatial practices like tourism show precisely that the ways we look at nature cannot but depend on the evolution of aesthetic taste and sensitivity. To assume that nature must be regarded with no prejudices inherited from the sphere of art and culture implies that even the human being be split in two: the cultural self, who looks at the artworks according to the biases of culture, and the natural self, freed from cultural conditioning and, at most, informed by scientific knowledge, in its turn regarded as simply positive, objective, neutral.

A similar partition between the cultural self and the natural self can be found in Rousseau's *Introduction of The Emile*: "The natural man is complete in himself; he is the numerical unit, the absolute whole, who is related only to himself or to his fellow-man. Civilized man is but a fractional unit that is dependent on its denominator, and whose value consists in its relation to the whole, which is the social organization." [12] The main flaw in this view is that it does not fully appreciate the embeddedness of the natural self into culture and, in turn, the dependence of the cultural self on nature, made evident, for instance, in biological needs, in the relationship between work and the cycles of the seasons, and in the transformations of habitation due to natural events such as floods and earthquakes or human-induced natural events such as global warming. The opposition of nature and culture does not allow for proper consideration of the overlapping areas between them. The outcome is an abstract view of aesthetic experience, forcibly compartmentalized into two strands, regardless of their entanglements and mutual interrelations.

As anticipated above, the term 'landscape' is little present in the works of environmental aesthetics. In one of his later essays, Hepburn explicitly uses it as a synonymous of natural environment: "We see the landscape as ominous, cosmically ominous, or as revealing-concealing a still greater beauty than its own. In a word, then, the many-levelled structure of aesthetic experience of nature can include great diversity of constituents: from the most particular -rocks, stones, leaves, clouds, shadows - to the most abstract and general ways we apprehend the world - the world as a whole." [13] The beauty of landscape is the hint of a superior, cosmic order.

There is no big difference between Hepburn's late idea of landscape and the famous landscape conception elaborated by Joachim Ritter in 1963. In both cases, landscape is about nature and instantiates the cosmic order, even if, in the admittedly metaphysical view of Hepburn, that instantiation is still possible nowadays, whereas, according to Ritter, landscape represents "the substitute of the cosmos of ancient metaphysics."^[14] As aesthetic surrogate, in Ritter's view, landscape is a spiritual product, the result of a historical development. The modern cognition of nature, quantitative and phenomenal, is the precondition for landscape to arise as a compensation for the loss of the cosmos. According to Ritter, landscape is a replacement of the cosmos; it is its aesthetic avatar. But, as surrogate of something real that has been forever lost, landscape falls into the history of human representations and, contrary to Humboldt's stance, loses its cognitive potential. Here, we find the leap between nature and culture in a different shape: the first reduced to a set of measurable phenomena and quantifiable data, and the second concerning the affective, subjective, or cultural meanings of nature, inherited by the term 'landscape.' In other words, nature is an objective entity to be approached by science, while landscape is a cultural or subjective projection on nature, open to artistic interpretation.

Environmental aesthetics, in its effort to reconstruct a substantive aesthetic relationship between nature and humans, tries to dodge the mediation of representational tools.

Basically, landscape can be considered as the most powerful representation of nature in Western modernity; but precisely as representation, it hampers the possibility of an immediate aesthetic relation between the subject and environment. This is the viewpoint of Allen Carlson, who sees landscape as a model in which environment is appraised in coherence to the principles of landscape painting. According to Carlson, the term 'landscape' must be understood in association with the concept of picturesque, which "reinforces various long-standing connections between the aesthetic appreciation of nature and the treatment of nature in art. The term 'picturesque' literally means 'picture-like,' and the theory of the picturesque advocates aesthetic appreciation in which the natural world is experienced as though divided into art-like scenes, which ideally resemble works of art, especially landscape painting, in both subject matter and

composition.”[15] When considering the aesthetic qualities of environments, according to what Carlson has labeled “the landscape model,” the aesthetic categories of the beautiful, the picturesque, and the sublime only refer to the compositional harmony or disharmony of the forms in sight. Such an aestheticization (or, better, pictorialization) of environment has little to do with real nature. Roger Paden sums up Carlson’s position as follows: “Without acts of composition, landscapes are disorganized collections of objects, lacking the order necessary to be judged formally beautiful. As a result, a landscape’s beauty, if it has any, is not a quality of the landscape itself, but is instead an artifact of the compositional process. On Carlson’s view, this process produces an artificial unity through the use of frames.”[16]

Now, independently from the axiological frame of the arguments and the solutions offered (or not offered) to the problem of natural beauty, what is of interest here is that authors so different from each other, like Ritter and Carlson, make of landscape a product of culture somehow set against nature. As a consequence, the beauty of landscape lies in a compositional harmony that is interpreted either as the aesthetic substitute of the lost cosmos (Ritter) or as the representational imposition of artistic frames onto nature (Carlson). Let us note that, if in Hepburn the term ‘landscape’ maintains a positive nuance, for it is fully juxtaposed to the notion of environment, in Ritter (reader of Hegel) landscape has a positive value, for it springs from the spiritual development of the human gaze and is opposed to sheer nature, meaningless in itself; and, finally, in Carlson, ‘landscape’ results from the improper overlap between the sphere of the artistic, from which it stems and to which it belongs, and the sphere of nature, the substantive character of which is lost in the representational mediation. Ritter can hardly be considered a representative of environmental aesthetics, for his approach precisely excludes that nature can be aesthetically appreciated if not in the form of aesthetic landscape; nonetheless, he shares with Hepburn and Carlson the fundamental premise of his argumentation: the dualism between nature and culture.

The main effect of this dualism on the aesthetic level is that the objective (natural, scientific) finds itself detached and opposed to the subjective (cultural, artistic). The dualism of nature and culture, in the end, entails and revives the quintessentially modern dualism, that of the

object and the subject. Yet, phenomenologically conceived, the notion of landscape is destined to shake the certainties of the dualistic framework.

3. Claiming the substantive character of landscape

There was a time when human geography took landscape as its main object of inquiry. In an essay issued in 1925, Carl Sauer, one of the forebears of American geography, defined 'landscape' as: "the English equivalent of the term German geographers are using largely, and strictly has the same meaning: a land shape, in which the shaping is by no means thought of as simply physical. It may be defined, therefore, as an area made up of distinct associations of forms, both physical and cultural." [17] The essential part of this definition is not the distinction between natural and anthropic forms, but the fact that they interact at the local level to produce a distinct association of forms endowed with a specific character—a qualitative totality. Sauer added that, phenomenologically the organic totality bearing the name of landscape comes before the intellectually differentiated domains of nature and culture. It is a "prior field of experience" [18] that cannot be reduced either to nature or to culture. This makes landscape a quite peculiar object: at the same time an entity in its own and the object of human perception and representation. As a consequence, landscape overcomes the boundaries between the scientific consideration of nature and the aesthetic appreciation of artworks: "The best geography has never disregarded the aesthetic qualities of landscape," revealing "a symphonic quality in the contemplation of the areal scene." Landscape, the very object of geography, deserves "a quality of understanding at a higher plane which may not be reduced to formal process." [19] A similar collaboration between aesthetic appreciation (and even representation, in the forms of paintings, pictures, maps, and literary descriptions) and scientific investigation is put in practice by Vidal de la Blache, one of the founders of modern French geography.

With the advent of positivist geography in the 1940s and 1950s, there has been a change of attitude. According to the influential geographer Richard Hartshorne, confusion resulted "from the use of the same word to mean, on the one hand, a definitely restricted area and, on the other, a more or less definitely defined aspect of an unlimited extent of the earth surface." [20] A difference was set between a territorial meaning of landscape and a scenic

dimension of it: geography had to address the objectivity of territorial relations, whereas landscape as scenery had to be left to art historians and aestheticians. Positivist geography is the place of the divorce between art and science. Just as, for Joachim Ritter, the concept of landscape has little to do with nature in its cognitive meaning, positivist geography builds an objectivist paradigm of spatial science grounded no longer on aesthetic perception, but on the possibility to overcome it by adopting the epistemology of the so-called hard sciences.[21] In this framework, landscape is abandoned precisely because of its proximity to perception and representation, seen as irrelevant to spatial science.

In the last decades, we are witnessing a recovery of the "substantive nature of landscape," to quote the title of an essay of the geographer Kenneth Olwig. The author refers to the relation between the history of the concept of landscape and the political history of some marks and counties in Northern Europe and England: "Landscape, I will argue, need not be understood as being either territory or scenery; it can also be conceived as a nexus of community, justice, nature, and environmental equity, a contested territory that is as pertinent today as it was when the term entered the modern English language at the end of the sixteenth century." [22] In this argumentative context, it is of great interest that those counties bearing the names of *Land* or *Landschaften* back in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Denmark, North Friesland, and Northern England were characterized by the persistence of customary institutions that ensured a relatively autonomous development of the local communities. Olwig argues that: "One of the factors that makes these *Landschaften* special is the strength of the link between community (*Gemeinschaft* in German) and place." [23] Such political approach seems to put in the background the aesthetic dimension of landscape, reducing it to territory, that is, a purely objective entity, just as environment.

There is, however, a powerful relationship between the rediscovery of the political substance of landscape and the aesthetic field. The phenomenological issue of inhabiting, raised by Martin Heidegger in his essay, *Building Dwelling Thinking* (1951), and immediately refashioned in geographical terms by Eric Dardel, in *L'homme et la terre* (1952), can be the mediating term between the sphere of aesthetic appreciation and the material, territorial, objective reality of the inhabited land. This is also the

direction taken by the European Convention of Landscape signed in Florence in 2000, which defines landscape as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.”[24] In this definition, the aesthetic question seems to be missing, but it perdures in the reference to the perception of people and to the character of landscape. On the one hand, people perceive environments, and perception is what makes of environments (or territories) full-fledged landscapes—the lived environments of which Berleant speaks in *Living in the Landscape*. [25] On the other hand, when people perceive a landscape, they grasp its character—that means its inherent qualitative side that does not primarily depend on the gaze of the beholder, but results from the actual interaction of natural and human elements, as it is in Carl Sauer’s definition. The confusion despised by Hartshorne, but also by Ritter and Carlson, reoccurs at the phenomenological level of the relation that comes before the poles instantiated by it. Instead of confusion, however, we should speak of a fruitful dialectic of reciprocal formation and conditioning, to the point that it is impossible to think about the reality of landscapes without referring to how they are perceived, and vice versa.

Augustin Berque claims that landscape is at the same time the geographical place and the way we perceive, interpret, and represent it.[26] Understood in this way, it can be considered a major locus of dialogue between aesthetics and geography, that is, between arts and science. In the substantive approach, landscape does not depend on art; rather, art depends on landscape, but at the same time contributes to refashion it continuously. This also means that aesthetic judgement about landscape is not confined to an allegedly separated aesthetic realm, but it interacts, depends on, and contributes to shape other kinds of judgments, such as the moral and the cognitive.

4. The beauty of landscape: overcoming scenery

The scenic interpretation of landscape has been criticized in order to develop more holistic approaches to landscape, vindicating its multisensory character. As the philosopher Ed Casey remarks in a book specifically devoted to landscape representations: “Appealing as it does to all bodily senses and to their synesthetic unity, landscape is panperceptual.”[27] It is now clear that a purely visual notion of beauty is not satisfactory to understand the

aesthetic quality of landscape. References to beauty are missing in the definition of the European Convention of 2000; yet, the concept of landscape continues to hold at a certain normative value that includes also some reference to the idea of harmony and the beautiful. Landscape is not only about the concrete interrelation between how a lived environment is and how it is perceived; it also embodies the regulative idea of a happy, fulfilled communication between individual experience, communal life, and the lived environment.[28] In this framework, beauty may take on a regulative value as long as it does not refer to the mere compositional harmony of an object, as if landscape painting were the rule of ontology and phenomenology. Landscape planning based on the application of standard compositional rules on spaces endowed with very different histories and characters has often entailed a standardization of both the gaze and real landscapes that has very little to do with the search for beauty. This does not mean that the search for beauty in landscapes is detrimental as such or that it should be dismissed along with abstract notions of beauty elaborated by the aesthetic consciousness (commercially exploited), regardless of the perception of the inhabitants. The concept of beauty inherent to landscape must necessarily be relational and may convey not only strictly aesthetic value but also moral and political meanings about landscapes.

The regulatory value of landscape, at once ethical-political and aesthetic, can emerge in a severe critique of the ugliness of modernization, expression of the inexorable spread of bad living. A similar path is followed by Caterina Resta, in her book *Geofilosofia del Mediterraneo* (2012), in which the concept of landscape clearly converges on that of place and the deformities of Messina's urban landscape caught arriving from the sea become the symbol of a denial of place and its aesthetic-phenomenological values:

Since Messina is not simply de-localized space, pure desert or flat oceanic expanse, it is not simply the matter on which one hopes to imprint new orders, but it is the deformed that leads back to the formless, to chaos, to anarchy, which is absence of Principle and Measure, Babel, city of total confusion. Suffice it to come from the sea to realize, at a glance, in a single startling view, not to be confronted with a built-up area, but with a haphazard concrete jumble, rained down nobody knows from where or how, that havocs what, by sheer effort of retrospective imagination, one can guess was the beauty of the natural site, now irreparably

lost. Rarely, I think, that much disharmony can appear more clearly or be more stridently.[29]

This is a case of negative aesthetics concerning the visual scenery of Messina seen from the sea.

Consistently with the aforementioned “panperceptuality” of landscape, negative aesthetics involves also other sensitive dimensions. It can consist in “high levels of sound or noise, bad air, excessive visual stimulation, and overcrowding... every form of pollution also includes perceptual insult and causes aesthetic damage as well. High levels of sound or noise, bad air, excessive visual stimulation, and overcrowding are aesthetically as well as physically damaging.”[30]

The example drawn from Caterina Resta and the elaboration offered by Arnold Berleant suffice to reveal the ethical and political meaning of landscape negative aesthetics, hence of landscape aesthetics in general and the search for landscape beauty. If landscape is a nexus of environment, perception, dwelling, and community, landscape beauty represents the regulative ideal of a successful balance among those constitutive elements of landscape. There is no algorithm to be followed for the ideal of beauty to be realized in general; the ineradicable diversity of landscapes advocates for an always local achievement of the ideal of beauty.

The claim for the local character of landscape beauty is not reducible to the acknowledgement of the plurality of cultural ideals of beauty. Cultural ideals of beauty may be relative and various, but, in this claim, there may be hidden a reduction of aesthetic appreciation to a merely cultural fact. We are rather attempting to lay the basis for an updated conception of “substantive” beauty, whose ambit would be the harmonic integration of land, individuals, and local community—a harmony that pertains both to the fields of perception and cognition and can hardly be reduced to mere compositional rules according to the “scenic model” countered by Carlson. Moreover, the regulative ideal of beauty can be thought as belonging to the utopic dimension of landscape; landscape beauty is, at the same, an ideal based on the concrete and site-specific assessment of local characteristics and needs and a utopian drive towards the realization of “earth as the home of man.”[31] Even if each particular landscape has in itself a specific drive for beauty, landscapes should not be understood as closed and bounded unities without

communication among them. Landscapes owe their stability to the crystallization of nature and history on space that they display, but they owe their processual, unstable character to both the mobility of the perceptual fields of the subjects and the influence any landscape can always have on the others. Between the standardization of landscapes, brought under the umbrella of a unique ideal of beauty, and the excessive particularization of landscapes, turned into the spatial outputs of cultures mistakenly thought of as pristine and internally consistent totalities, there is the utopian quest for a unification of earth through the appreciation of the ever-changing pluralities of landscapes.

Landscape beauty represents a good case for attempting a retrieval of the original interrelations among the truth, the good, and the beautiful. In fact, in the ideal of the landscape beauty, the harmony between the ecological, the cultural, and the socio-political sides of a single landscape can be aesthetically felt, just like the disharmonies of landscapes can be felt in a wide array of negative aesthetics experiences. Environmental aesthetics can successfully integrate the concept of landscape into its scope, as shown by the efforts of authors like Rosario Assunto, Paolo D'Angelo, and Arnold Berleant, only when a consistent effort of overcoming the dualism of nature and culture is pursued. In this article, I have limited myself to lay the conceptual basis for a substantive understanding of the concepts of landscape and landscape beauty. After having gained a sense of the utopian character of both, further research will be required in order to delve into the kind of harmony entailed by the sense of beauty implicit in the very idea of landscape, the dangers inherent to such conception, and possible ways to face and overcome them.

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Endnotes

[1] Ronald Hepburn, "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty," in *British Analytical Philosophy*, eds. B. Williams, A. Montefiore (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 285-310.

[2] Yuriko Saito, "The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56, no. 2 (1998), pp. 101-11.

[3] See, for instance, the dystopias of inhabitable cities of the twentieth century, such as the post-apocalyptic San Francisco of Philip Dick's novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, the basis for the film, *Blade Runner*.

[4] Serena Feloj, "Environmental Aesthetics," in *International Lexicon of Aesthetics*, 2018.

[5] The notion of nature employed by the three authors is not perfectly identical. There are different shades of meaning basically depending on the different experiences of nature available to authors who have inhabited different places in different epochs. In Rousseau's work, nature is beautiful inasmuch as it is covered by "the green life of earth" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Peter France, Penguin Classics 1980, 68); in Thoreau's *Walden: Of, Life in the Woods* (1854), there is more emphasis on wilderness; in Kohák's more recent

work, *Embers and the Stars: A Philosophical Inquiry Into the Moral Sense of Nature* (1984), nature is more abstractly seen as that spontaneous, innocent reality that counterbalances the dominance of technology. However, in all instances, a moral notion of nature entails an aesthetic dimension: the beautiful is the visible mark of the good.

[6] As it has been noted: "Hepburn's interest in metaphysics can be traced to his early research. While studying the philosophy of religion, Hepburn found that the metaphysical notion of 'Being' may be applied to aesthetics. As St. Thomas stated, 'beauty is Being itself, Being is a transcendental aspect of beauty'" [Chung-Ping Yang, "Hepburn's Natural Aesthetic and Its Implications for Aesthetic Education," *International Education Studies* 6, no. 7 (2013), 226].

[7] In a sense like the one elaborated by the Transcendentalist movement of New England in XIX century: see, for instance, Alireza Manzari, "Nature in American Transcendentalism," *English Language and Literature Studies* 2, no. 3 (2012), 61-68.

[8] Emily Brady, "Environmental Aesthetics," in *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, eds. J. Callicott and R. Frodeman (Detroit: McMillan, 2009), p. 313.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 317.

[10] Lately Brady's attention has been directed towards "spaces and places that emerge from various nature-culture interaction" [Emily Brady, Isis Brook and Jonathan Prior, *Between Nature and Culture: The Aesthetics of Modified Environments* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), p. 2]. What is interesting in such shift of emphasis from natural to hybrid environments is that the latter constitutes the primitive phenomenological scene of our everyday existence, in which both natural and anthropic elements and processes are blended together.

[11] The second volume of *Cosmos* (1848), as is well known, is entirely devoted to the conceptions of nature expressed in different spaces and epochs through various artistic forms, among which landscape painting is worthy of particular attention. At the time of Humboldt's travels, it was customary for geographical explorers to travel with painters for their ability in catching both the atmospheres and the details of the visited places. Landscape painting was loaded with cognitive value. On this subject, a pivotal

contribution is represented by an article of the geographer Edmunds Bunksee, "Humboldt and an Aesthetic Tradition in Geography," *Geographical Review* 71, no. 2 (1981), 127-46.

[12] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Rousseau's Emile or Treatise on Education*, trans. William Payne (New York & London: Appleton and Company, 1918), p. 5.

[13] Ronald Hepburn, "Landscape and the Metaphysical Imagination," *Environmental Values* 5, no. 3 (1996), 191-204.

[14] Adriana Verissimo Serrão, "Landscape as a World Conception," in *Philosophy of Landscape. Think, Walk, Act*, eds. Adriana Verissimo Serrão and Monika Reker (Lisbon: Centre for Philosophy, 2019), p. 30.

[15] Allen Carlson, *Nature and Landscape: An Introduction to Environmental Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 4.

[16] Roger Paden, "A Defense of the Picturesque," *Environmental Philosophy* 10, no. 2 (2015), 5.

[17] Carl Sauer, "The morphology of landscape," in *Human Geography: An Essential Anthology*, eds. J. Agnew, D. N. Livingstone, A. Rogers (Oxford: Blackwell 1996), p. 299.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 297.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 311.

[20] Richard Hartshorne, *The Nature of Geography* (Ann Arbor: Edward Brother, 1939), p. 154.

[21] A good introduction to positivism in human geography from the point of view of radical cultural geography is the book of Derek Gregory, *Ideology, Science and Human Geography* (London: Hutchinson, 1978).

[22] Kenneth Olwig, "Recovering the Substantive Nature of Landscape," in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86, no. 4 (1996), 630-31.

[23] *Ibid.*, 632.

[24] Council of Europe Landscape Convention * 1 as amended by the 2016 Protocol Florence, 20.X.2000, 2, site consulted April 7, 2023.

[25] Arnold Berleant takes it that environment is "the more general term, embracing the many factors, including the human ones, that combine to form the conditions of life,"

while landscape is “an individual environment, its peculiar features embodying in a distinctive way the factors that constitute any environment and emphasizing the human presence as the perceptual activator of that environment” [Arnold Berleant, *Living in the Landscape* (Kansas City: University of Kansas, 1997), p. 12]. By expressly refusing to oppose environment as the merely natural to landscape as its artistic counterpoint, Berleant emphasizes the idiographic character of landscape and, at the same time, includes also human settlements and manufactures in the very notion of environment. In his approach, environment and landscape are quite juxtaposed, even if landscape maintains a phenomenological and aesthetic priority in that it alludes to a specific association of environmental objects and phenomena that is always local and allows for a sense of place and place attachment to emerge.

[26] See Augustin Berque, *Thinking Through Landscape*, trans. Anne-Marie Feenberg-Dibon (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

[27] Ed Casey, *Representing Place. Landscape Paintings and Maps* (Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

[28] This is the idea of landscape as “convivial utopia,” proposed by the Italian geographer Massimo Quaini, in *L’ombra del paesaggio. L’orizzonte di un’utopia conviviale* (Parma: Diabasis, 2006). Quaini’s understanding of the normative side of landscape as utopia is important to avoid slipping into essentialism and forms of communitarianism that, at the same time, are naive and dangerous.

[29] Caterina Resta, *Geofilosofia del Mediterraneo* (Messina: Edizioni Mesogea, 2012), p. 140. My translation.

[30] Arnold Berleant, *Sensibility and Sense: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World* (Cambridge: Imprint Academic Press 2010), pp. 162-3.

[31] Yi-Fu Tuan, “A View of Geography,” *Geographical Review* 81, no .1 (1991), 100.

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