In this chapter, I argue that phenomenology cannot simply be drawn on for a methodology for landscape archaeology, commensurate with other techniques and methods. Rather, it requires that we should think about landscape in a wholly unfamiliar way: only then can the insights of an experiential approach enlighten or challenge more conventional perspectives. Over the past 15 years or so, phenomenological thought has come to exercise a considerable influence over the way that archaeologists address past landscapes. The phenomenological tradition in philosophy concerns itself with the conditions that make possible the human experience of the world, and it maintains that experience and interpretation are fundamental to human existence (Thomas 2006). It is not simply that people experience their world and make sense of it, as one kind of activity among others: we are distinguished by being interpreting beings. This perspective has informed approaches to space, place, and architecture that focus on the ways that topographies and structures might have been physically encountered and negotiated by people in the past, whether as a complement, or as an alternative, to more conventional landscape archaeologies (see Tilley, this volume). More recently, Andrew Fleming (2006) has presented a series of criticisms of this form of “post-processual landscape archaeology” that demand serious consideration. Fleming contends that experiential archaeologies are unwise to neglect (or reject) the field skills that have been gradually perfected within orthodox landscape studies; that “phenomenological” fieldwork is often subjective, personal, and consequentially difficult to test or replicate; and that the written products of this kind of work gravitate toward a “hyper-interpretive” style that exceeds the capacity of the evidence to substantiate it (Fleming 2006: 276).

Fleming’s observation that landscape archaeologists have always cultivated a fine-grained documentation of physical traces, which relies on immersion in the field over long periods of time, is entirely correct. Yet the problem that was originally identified with this kind of investigation is that the sense of the archaeologist's having “inhabited” and experienced a landscape in the course of fieldwork has often been missing from the written accounts that were offered, while the detailed empirical observations that were made tended to be subsumed within narratives that took the landscape itself as their object (Thomas 1993: 26). Thus, where the landscape was treated as a palimpsest of traces of changing economic regimes or systems of land tenure, and where the focus was on “things that have been done to the land” (Bender, Hamilton, and Tilley 1997: 148), the intimate scale of analysis that has traditionally provided...
In this chapter, a rather more radical view is proposed. An experiential analysis of landscape is unworkable unless it is placed in the context of an entirely different conception of landscape from that conventionally employed in archaeology. This is not to say that it cannot be utilized alongside established methods of analysis, or even that it cannot fruitfully make use of information gathered through the robust field methodologies that Fleming approves. Nonetheless, I suggest that traditional landscape archaeology and “postprocessual landscape archaeology” are not complementary, alternative ways of investigating the same phenomenon, and that the latter necessarily connects with what Tim Ingold (1995: 75) characterizes as “the dwelling perspective.”

From Building to Dwelling

The force of the argument for rejecting the definition of landscape as an aggregation of cultural and natural features built up over time is that it is a distinctively modern Western notion that is anachronistic when applied to the distant past. That such a “landscape” is primarily apprehended visually, by a distanced observer, is perhaps only a symptom of a more fundamental problem. In the period since the Renaissance, space has come to be understood as an internally homogeneous medium within which objects are contained, such that their relationships with one another can be expressed in geometrical terms (Jay 1993: 114; see also Casey, this volume). Yet such a view has displaced an earlier, Aristotelian cosmology in which meaning and moral value were considered to be intrinsic to the world. Consequentially, the world required interpretation rather than description (Thomas 2004: 8–9).

The Scientific Revolution and the Cartesian philosophy that it drew on prioritized vision both because they valued the disengagement of the impartial observer and because they considered meaning to be an exclusive property of the inner realm of the mind. The external world was characterized by relations of extension rather than of intelligibility, and the senses provided the means by which the mind acquired raw information, which it might then render meaningful. Among these, sight had the privilege of gathering data from a position of detachment, appreciating spatial relationships and identifying classificatory order. So the emphasis on the visual in the modern conception of landscape (e.g., Cosgrove 1984; Olwig 1993) relates at once to the “disenchantment” of the world, the valorization of objectivity, and the
yet in everyday life, it is not just sight that identifies what we make of the world and that identifies our landscapes. Rather, our place in the world is manifest, apparent, and capable of reflection through varied and ongoing cues: the sounds of the birds may announce the waking morning; rhythmic poundings may announce the preparation of kava and sacred men’s business in various Melanesian societies (e.g., Rainbird 2002); the fallen, dry crispy leaves underfoot signal the changing seasons. Each of these cues, and more, alerts us to the nature of the world in which we live. These are not distanced cues, but they rather identify each of us with-others-in-the-world. There is, therefore, a tension between the distanced visual landscapes theorized in Western systems of knowledge and the landscapes that we experience.

These developments stemming from Enlightenment thinking are characteristic of the emergence of the “building perspective,” a way of understanding the world in which empirical reality is understood to be entirely independent of and prior to any degree of human involvement (Ingold 1995: 66). This implies that the landscape is first of all given as a set of material resources that people subsequently begin to exploit or inhabit. Equally, this view holds that a distinction can be drawn between the landscape “as it really is” and the landscape as it is perceived, which is presumably built up in the minds of people on the basis of their observations (Ingold 2000: 168). Where the landscape is a purely material given, it is likely to be identified with “nature,” while its representation in the mind (and subsequent material representation or transformation through art or craft) is identified as “culture.” The building perspective therefore combines the culture/nature dichotomy with a form of cognitivism in which human beings construct internal symbolic worlds that are quite distinct from reality. An important corollary of this view is that the perception of the world is always considered to be indirect or mediated, with sense-impressions being filtered through a cognitive apparatus or a symbolic order of some kind.

These views are pervasive within archaeology. For instance, it is commonplace to distinguish between “space” and “place,” whereby the former refers to the undifferentiated condition of the world before humans encounter and utilize it, and the latter refers to the outcome of human “socialization” or “enculturation” (e.g., Chapman 1988). In other words, human beings bring meaning to unformed space, and in the process transform it into significant and distinctive place—by naming, building structures, or making clearings, for example (for this would mean is that when human beings first come across a particular location, their experience of it takes the form of the acquisition of sense-data, which have an information content but no meaning. Only latterly does a location gather its significance. Similarly, environmental archaeologists often talk of the “human impact” on the landscape. This gives the impression that human beings are extrinsic to the natural world and that they discontinuously inflict “impacts” on it. Although not causing such impacts, they presumably occupy some other purely cultural sphere.

If this “building perspective” is characteristic of Western modernity, it can be contrasted with the notion of “dwelling” found in the work of the philosopher Martin Heidegger. Heidegger contends that it is unhelpful to imagine that we must first build structures before we can begin to dwell; rather, dwelling is the condition that humans experience when they are at home in the world (Heidegger 1993: 350). Ideally, architecture (and construction in general) should be an outgrowth and embodiment of this state of dwelling, rather than representing an imposition onto the material world of designs that have been produced in the abstract. For Heidegger, dwelling is a relationship with the world characterized by equanimity, in which one cares for and preserves one’s surroundings while also allowing them to be themselves, without bending them to one’s design (Young 2002: 99). It follows that the willful forcing of materials into some kind of template, as in the mass production of commodities, amounts to a form of violence. Dwelling is at once caring for and being cared for, a reciprocal relationship that allows the physical world to reveal its sacred character. Of course, “sacredness” is precisely the kind of meaningful content that a post-Cartesian ontology would reject outright in the case of the object world. Perhaps more important, this point hints at the distinction between a landscape that is understood as a collection of isolated entities, and one that is fundamentally relational, an issue to which we will return. For Heidegger, the predicament of humanity in the late modern age is that we have ceased to be dwellers and to be at home in our surroundings (Young 2002: 74).

This brings us to an apparent contradiction in Heidegger’s arguments, for he suggests that dwelling is characteristic of human existence, that humans are fundamentally dwellers, but that also under modern conditions we have lost sight of dwelling. For Heidegger the “loss of dwelling” is the key symptom of the destitution of modernity (Young 2002: 33), and this would appear to intro-
However, the argument is actually that modern metaphysics restricts the ways in which the world can reveal itself to us, by reducing people and things to subjects and objects. The landscape, for instance, appears to be composed exclusively of resources that are at our disposal for consumption and gratification (as lumber, fuel, hardcore, real estate, building stone, and so on), so that we assume a position of exteriority toward it and can no longer truly inhabit it. It may be helpful to compare this argument to Marx’s conception of alienation (see Ollman 1976), in which capitalist economic processes obscure the relationship between people and the products of their labor, so that the latter become reified as asocial, free-standing entities. Heidegger is effectively describing a more thoroughgoing form of alienation in which dwelling is occluded, and a caring and nonviolent relationship with worldly things becomes more difficult to achieve. We might say that this is not so much a state of nondwelling as a deprivative, etiolated, or inauthentic form of dwelling in which people experience rootlessness and continual anxiety.

**Relational Landscapes**

If we accept that the view of the landscape as an aggregation of self-contained entities is a modern imposition, which may not even adequately convey the way that most people today experience their surroundings, we should explore the implications of a landscape that is at once an internally interconnected whole, and inherently meaningful. The first point is that “places” are not created through a human bestowal of meaning, but emerge from the background of a landscape that people always already understand to some degree. People do not perceive worldly things through the misty gauze of a cultural filter, but nor are they capable of an entirely innocent reading of the land, severed from history and tradition. As Tilley (1994: 13, 2004: 10) has argued, the “discovery” of places is achieved through the human body. We encounter places when we are already in the midst of them, corporeally and spatially located and living through our own senses. However, it should be apparent that this is not the same thing as saying that a human subject encounters and appropriates a worldly object. On the contrary, it is the inherited and sedimented familiarity of the landscape as the context within which everyday activities are performed that enables specific places to reveal themselves in ways that are readily intelligible. Even those places that we have not visited before are generally experienced (whether in strolling, searching for firewood or mushrooms, tending livestock, or seeking a path through the woods). Their meaning is not generated out of an abstract and distanced observation of an array of discrete entities, or pieced together from an accumulation of nuggets of information. Rather, our knowledge of the landscape develops in an implicit way, a general understanding of the whole preceding and contextualizing any specific observation.

We might say that people’s understanding of their landscape is “pre-intentional” (Wrathall 2000: 94), in that it is not held in the head but realized only in a specific concrete setting. Following a forest path is something that is achieved in the practical event of placing one’s feet on the path itself, and under these circumstances it does not need to be “thought through” in abstract terms at all. Yet, it is this kind of nonrepresentable understanding that renders intentional acts within the landscape possible. Actions such as shooting a deer, building a shelter, or knapping a flint blade are able to be conducted because at any given time people have at their disposal a range of traditions, skills, cues, and understandings that would be impossible to verbalize in their entirety. This unarticulated background inheres in the physical presence of the landscape as much as in the human body or the mind.

In the philosophical literature, there has been considerable discussion of the way that implicit bodily skills and habitual practices provide the unconsidered background for human action (Taylor 1993, 2000; Wrathall 2000). These skills and practices are hard to represent as algorithms or explicit instructions, and this undermines the credibility of cognitivist accounts of human functioning. But it is arguable that too little attention has been directed toward the status of the material world, and specifically the lived landscape, as part of this background. If we are to argue that the understandings that people routinely employ in coping with their world do not amount to a set of representations contained in the head, then it is clear that places and objects are implicated in the way that our explicit projects are formulated. This is not the same thing as saying that the objects that surround us at any given point in time constitute a kind of store, from which ideas or representations can be withdrawn (as in the notion of “external symbolic storage” [Donald 1991: 316]). On the contrary, our existence permeates the places we presently occupy, have occupied, and plan to occupy in future. It is the physical world as it is known to us, the landscape of recalled
provides an integral element in all human action. Modern Western thought often implicitly assumes that human beings are entirely self-contained entities, whose faculties are logically independent of their surroundings. But any person who did not inhabit a material world (imagine a body floating in a dark void—or even a creature with no corporeal existence—surrounded by no material things at all) would find it impossible to act and would be unable to formulate any projects for the future. There would be no motion toward anything, temporal or spatial, as there would be no emplacement in any meaningful location nor any emergence in any meaningful temporality. Relationality (spatial and temporal) would disappear.

When Ingold refers to the "temporality of the landscape," and stresses that it is unrelated to clock-time (1993: 158), he has in mind this embedding of protention and retention in the lived environment. As he says, any activity that is conducted in the present is situated and rendered comprehensible in relation to past happenings, which are manifested or called to mind by the landscape. In this sense, people inhabit the past (although I would add that they also inhabit the future, in the sense of dwelling in the locations of their projected actions, and sensing a momentum of life beyond the now). Barrett (1999: 256) illustrates the archaeological importance of such a perspective by pointing out that while we conventionally assign monuments of particular types to separate chronological horizons, and present them as representative of specific stages of social evolution or socioeconomic structures, their persistence over time forms the preexisting context in which subsequent construction is undertaken. Thus for Barrett, the monumental cemeteries of the British Bronze Age formed the background against which the constructional activities of the Iron Age were played out. Similarly, I have argued elsewhere that the beginning of the Neolithic period in Britain (ca. 4000 B.C.) involved the introduction of a series of unfamiliar material and symbolic resources (ceramic vessels, polished stone tools, a variety of forms of public architecture including large timber halls and megalithic chambers, and domesticated plants and animals) into a variety of landscapes that had previously been formed and understood through the rhythms and knowledge of the Mesolithic (Thomas 2007: 431). In this setting, these innovations were recontextualized, and yet their presence gradually brought about the transformation of the British landscape to a pattern dominated by stock-rearing and (eventually) farming. The landscape is historical in that erosion, flooding, vegetational change, deforestation, grazing, cultivation, and building are continually transforming it. However, rather than representing a succession of static phases that are to be unpeeled from the earth’s surface by the archaeologist, the changes wrought by these processes are the means by which the landscape hands itself down to the present. At any given point, the landscape is in temporal motion and presents a shifting horizon within which actions are carried out, and places “show up” as distinct and comprehensible locations. Any place is disclosed within the totality of a landscape, and this means that the significance of each place is subtly altered as its constitutive background is transformed. For instance, a stone burial cairn constructed in a woodland clearance becomes an entirely different kind of place when the trees surrounding it are felled, and its position on a hilltop can be appreciated from a distance. Nonetheless, the continuing presence of the cairn provides an enduring reminder of events that took place before the clearance occurred.

**A Hermeneutics of Landscape**

The subject/object relationship exercises a powerful influence in the contemporary world. Phenomenological thought has inspired modes of archaeological investigation that privilege the immediacy of experience over abstract description, yet it is disturbingly easy for analyses that concern themselves with the ways that places and landscapes can be occupied and moved through to be reduced to exercises in replicating the perceptions of past people (a tension that is evident in the exchange between Ingold and Tilley [2005]). I have argued that this problem cannot be resolved if we imagine that this experiential archaeology is an alternative means of investigating landscapes that are conceived as arrangements of inert matter. There is nothing wrong in mapping, photographing, digitizing, and surveying an area of the earth’s surface, or incorporating it into a geographical information system (but see Byrne). But it is a mistake to suppose that these techniques provide information about the same kind of entity as that which a phenomenological archaeology might address. If we ask how such objective, meaning-free terrains were perceived by prehistoric communities, the answer must necessarily be expressed in the form of a cognized model—the content of a prehistoric mind. It follows that if we wish to eschew the mind-body dichotomy, we need to recognize that the “objective” topography is quite different...
human dwelling. It is presumably the latter that an
archaeology that concerns itself with experience,
occupation, and bodily practice seeks to inves-
tigate. Furthermore, we should not imagine that
the physical terrain that constitutes the analytical
object for conventional archaeologies of landscape
represents an established, preinterpretive bedrock,
upon which the lived and interpreted landscape is
built. On the contrary, it is more like an analyti-
cal construct, extracted from the lived and experi-
cenced landscape of the present day through a
process of conceptual reduction.

It follows that questions such as “what was
the symbolic meaning of this structure?” may
be inappropriate for an “archaeology of dwell-
ing.” Instead, the central concern would be with
how a landscape was occupied and understood,
and how it provided the context for the formul-
ation and enactment of human projects. “How
did people relate to it?” in different contexts of
engagement may be a more appropriate ques-
tion. This is nonetheless an interpretive en-
terprise, because it seeks to develop an holistic
understanding of the past landscape in the pre-
cent, analogous to (if distinct from) the under-
standing that past people themselves may have
developed. Our own experiences in walking
landscapes and encountering the physical traces
that past communities have left behind undoubt-
edly have a place in this kind of investigation.
However, we should be mindful that the “back-
ground” against which ancient objects and struc-
tures reveal themselves to us is a largely modern
one, composed of contemporary skills, under-
standings, and practices of which we may be
only partially aware. Our experience of a place
or artifact in its landscape context is of value
because the thing itself is more than the prod-
uct or outcome of an extinct pattern of social
life. On the contrary, it represents an integral
and still-extant element of that pattern. But
appreciating its significance requires that the
part should placed into as complete as possible
a whole. An “experiential archaeology” should
therefore be conceived as only one aspect of a
kind of “hermeneutics of landscape,” in which
how a phenomenon presents itself to us in the
present is only one step in attempting to under-
stand how it might have presented itself in a past
context. This means that our field observations
need to be set against a picture of the subsistence
practices, technological capabilities, patterns of
mobility, gender roles, ritual observances, and
conceptions of personhood that characterized past
societies. If the landscape (“natural” and
of meaning that contextualizes action and ren-
ders entities comprehensible, it does so only
as human practices and projects are threaded
through it. The task of the archaeologist is to
reintroduce these to the past landscape through
the work of interpretation. Dwelling is what hap-
pens when traditions of practice find themselves
at home in a landscape, producing a climate of
expectation and assumption within which future
projects can be devised and carried forward.
Archaeology imagines the past by placing con-
temporary observations and experiences into as
complete as possible a reconstruction of the fac-
tors that informed their ancient counterparts.

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