The decisions that people make based on arguments of moral or ethical evaluation vary significantly across cultural and geographical orders (D. Smith 2000: 5). Social practices of judging and deciding thus have a spatial dimension that is relevant for an understanding of not only how people create and configure dwelling spaces but also how the work of archaeologists or heritage managers can severely modify both the conceptualization and the material configuration of particular places and landscapes.

The spatial dimensions of ethical judgment create substantial material effects with enduring affective power. Landscapes, in particular, are complex spatial formations produced by people and nonhuman agents in the process of inhabiting, that is, practicing, valuing, and imagining particular topographies over the long term (Ingold 2000: 190–93; Roepstorff and Bubandt 2004: 15). Material and immaterial aspects of human practices flesh out particular landscapes, which in this way become perfect examples of the “trialectic” dynamic that underwrites all human spatial formations: simultaneously physical, conceptualized, and lived (Lefebvre 1991: 33–39).

Landscapes are indeed value-laden and thus shape the consciousness of people who inhabit them. However, they are also spaces perpetually subject to change. This change results not only from shifting social meanings and concomitant shifts in political and interpretive strategies but also from the physical and affective presence of a multitude of nonhuman agents, from atmospheric conditions to ancestors and deities. It is this collective character of landscapes (in the sense of Latour 1993), this way in which they call attention to the ontological equality of all aspects of life, that makes them a unique empirical and theoretical space to think about ethical judgment and action in the field of archaeological inquiry.

In the following sections, the chapter discusses some of the main issues in ethical thought and their implications for landscape. It will be proposed that although codes of practice—connected with analytical philosophical traditions—are certainly necessary, archaeological ethics could benefit from a relational perspective inspired by continental philosophy and the actual experience of people involved in particular landscapes as part of their professional practice and/or their daily lives.

Landscapes provide unique possibilities for developing a truly relational approach to ethics. The practice of landscape archaeology, which forces scholars to transcend sites and locales as
well as narrow temporal scales, often takes place in a climate of environmental and identity politics, Indigenous land claims, heritage conservation, and community development. This context for professional practice presents many challenges to some of the more pervasive and problematic disciplinary assumptions, which presume that archaeology’s subjects are mainly dead or that archaeology can be a depoliticized, objective field of inquiry (see discussions in McGuire 2003; Meskell 2002, 2005a, 2005b; Pluciennik 2001: 1).

The question of ethics in archaeology has been generally focused on the analysis and discussion of the rights and duties of archaeologists in their specific professional involvement in the world (e.g., Lynott and Wylie 2000, see below). These deliberations and explorations are never carried out detached from political concerns. Although some authors have argued that ethical deliberations are distinct from actual political issues (e.g., Groatke and Warrick 2006: 169), in practice, ethical judgments routinely shape decisions and lead to action (Singer 1994: 8). Moreover, the discussion over principles for action and decisions involves—or excludes—interpretative communities with different degrees of social power (Smith and Burke 2005). Conversely, peoples’ political actions have increasingly been caught in multiple and competitive normative frameworks, from human rights to religious law, social justice, and citizen security, to name just a few (Goodale 2006: 34; see also Cowan 2006: m15). This complex intertwining becomes more apparent when addressing past landscapes in the context of contemporary land claims or cultural and environmental struggles, particularly when those landscapes were partly shaped by a history of violence from conquerors or settlers towards a previous population whose descendants seek to redress in the present.

The practice of landscape archaeology has lead scholars to realize that far from being mere records of past lives, landscapes are contemporary entities, embedded in living traditions with deep temporal dimensions (e.g., Baleé and Erickson 2006; Bender 1993, 1998; Daehnke 2007; Knapp and Ashmore 1999; Layton and Ucko 1999; Nicholas 2006; Thomas 2001). Additionally, although initially inspired by critical geography’s textual approach that examined landscape as a way of representing the world (e.g., Cosgrove 1998; Daniels and Cosgrove 1989; see Thomas 1993), current social archaeology seems to be moving toward emphasizing how landscapes are the results of habitual practice and interaction, in turn actively shaping competing social projects and experiences because landscapes render palpable the intricacies of human existence built by both durable and fleeting moments—the ebbs and flows in the making and unmaking of memory through the sensuous engagement with landforms, places, resources, atmospheric conditions, and so on—landscape archaeology is not only a subfield for which guidelines of professional conduct may be produced, but more importantly, it constitutes an adequate framework for interrogating archaeological and ethical practice in general.

Ethical Theory and Archaeology: Implications for Landscape Research

Originally concerned with regulating archaeological practice in the face of the new demands placed by the development of Cultural Resource Management (known as CRM in the United States; subsequently Cultural Heritage Management in some parts of the world) as well as with establishing professional boundaries with nonscholarly practitioners and collectors, the search for ethical guidelines grew slowly, but steadily, into ways of reflecting on the legitimacy of archaeologists’ authority as sole producer and guardian of the past (Wylie 2005). This transition toward a reflexive mood has been partly the result of the political intervention of Indigenous peoples in various areas of the world who started to claim control over the production of knowledge about their past, and of the objects associated to that past, as part of their rights to self-determination (Dogonske et al. 2002; Moser 1995; Swindler et al. 1997; Watkins 2002, 2003; Watkins et al. 2000). This trend was also stimulated by early postprocessual archaeologists, who argued for archaeological practice as a political practice situated in the present (e.g., Shanks and McGuire 1996; Shanks and Tilley 1987). With differences, the critical inquiry over academic cultural production and representation (of both past and present peoples) has been largely seen as a necessary requirement for a politically and ethically informed social archaeology (compare Hamilakis 2001; Hodder 1999; Meskell 2002; Meskell and Preucel 2004; Tarlow 2001; Thomas 2004).

The ongoing dialogue within the archaeological community and with several interlocutors outside its professional boundaries has established important discussion forums and yielded numerous publications concerned with the multiple levels of this debate (e.g., Lynott and Wylie 2000; Mathers et al. 2005; McNiven and Russell 2005; Meskell and Pels 2005; Pluciennik 2001; Scarre and Scarre 2006; Smith and Wobst 2005; Vitelli 1996; Zimmerman 2006; Thomas 2006).
is situated at the intersection of multiple discourses, domains of action, and value regimes, several professional societies and other disciplinary associations around the world have established guidelines that tend to coincide on most of the main issues. However, their language and structuring often reveal deep contradictions and conflicts over what should define archaeology’s accountability. Such a major disciplinary fault line traverses—rhizome-like, to borrow Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) metaphor—subdisciplines, institutions, and countries (e.g., Endere 2004; Funari 2006; Rosenswig 1997; Smith and Burke 2003).

It has been argued that these codes convey little consensus about which responsibilities should be first addressed (Pluciennik 2001; Smith and Burke 2003; Tarlow 2001). For instance, the Society of American Archaeology (SAA) has long espoused an ethics of “stewardship of the archaeological record” as its first principle, while the World Archaeology Congress (WAC) lists eight principles to abide and several rules to adhere, all concerned with the responsibilities of archaeologists toward Indigenous communities. Likewise, the issues raised by the Vermillion and Tamaki Makau-rua Accords on human remains and display of human remains and sacred objects, both sponsored by WAC, are rarely acknowledged by other codes and guidelines. These differences reveal the extent of the ongoing discussion and renegotiation of disciplinary values and question the likelihood of ever reaching international ethical standards beyond some general agreements such as respect for others and for archaeological materials (Smith and Burke 2003: 192). It should be noted that this concern for the difficulties in reaching international standards, although praiseworthy, may also facilitate a dangerous managerial attitude—akin to what characterizes many international aid agencies—toward highly diverse local situations. Codes of practice have been shown to favor hegemonic values and domains of signification deemed “universal,” a concept that often hides very particular cultural and political agendas (Korstanje and García Azcárate 2007; Labadi 2007; Meskell 2002, 2005a; Omland 2006).

In a similar vein, procedural codes of ethics and general principles of conduct have been criticized for imposing abstract principles in what otherwise are complex situations needing to be resolved on a case-by-case basis (Tarlow 2006). On some occasions, these codes and guidelines merely provide practitioners with a series of formalities to be followed in order to comply with regulations and avoid potential legal problems and research participation often means something very different from “local agreement” (Meskell 2005b: 90).

Lawlike codifications may also work to legitimize and perpetuate professional authority and exclusivity (Meskell and Pels 2005: 3). The existence of archaeological codes of ethics should not dispose practitioners to forego the constant reflection and revision of their principles and assumptions. Ethical practice means that principles and assumptions cannot be unilaterally defined but have to be the product of an open process of constant negotiation with those affected by studies of particular past and present cultural configurations.

It has also been argued that discursive formations concerned with self-reflexivity and the improvement of practice are deeply implicated with a wider culture of auditing and accountability, shaped by the migration of ideas and practices across transnational managerial domains (Strathern 2000: 58). Similarly, ethical discourse has been criticized for attempting to remove social analysis from the consideration of asymmetries in knowledge production (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1999: 43; Pels 2000: 136). Although such claims are themselves loaded with moral values (Kauppi 2000), they raise the valid point that ethics, if isolated from the political field, can be instrumental only to the perpetuation of inequalities (see McNiven and Russell 2005: 236). As Povinelli (2002: 14–17) has cogently argued, scholars cannot be naïve about the contradictory logic of moral projects that while aiming at “recognizing” the rights of Indigenous peoples or other disadvantaged groups, do so by means of discourses and practices that demand their self-fashioning into “acceptable” citizens, thereby erasing the very possibility of difference at the heart of contemporary multicultural democracies. A further twist on this logic is that modern states appropriate pre-Colonial history to build seemingly inclusive narratives of nationhood, while the same nation disavows the complex histories and ignores the present experiences of Indigenous groups (Byrne 1996, 2003; see Byrne, this volume).

In a more philosophical sense, the examination of the limits and responsibilities of individuals in professional groups tends to reify the modern category of the autonomous self; the all-encompassing academic “I” that sees everything, including the darkest motives and desires behind her/his moral decisions. The desire to bring to light, to incorporate into language, to make public, partakes of the revelatory project of the Enlightenment (Latour 1993: 142; Walker 1997: 73). In this way, the conception of ethics as the rational dilemmas of an idealized subject constitutes more an example of
Chapter 64: Topographies of Values: Ethical Issues in Landscape Archaeology

than a true engagement with the conflictive nature of social reality (Pels 2000: 138). Reflexivity—a dialogical process of mutually constituent subjects and objects—has been considered the alternative to the philosophies of reflection where the subject speculates about the nature of an opposing, detached object (Sandywell 1999). But what qualifies an adequate “constitutive reflexivity” as distinct from a mere self-satisfying introspection? And are standardized reflexive devices helpful at all (Woolgar 1988: 31)? Rather than denying the need for reflexivity, this questioning draws attention to the reality that judgments and decisions are made not by isolated individuals, but by people embedded in multiple and overlapping networks of signification and social values (Lynch 2000).

At the heart of these debates lies the philosophical problem (and its anthropological modulation) of the universal and the particular. This problem underlies the arguments of traditional ethical theory, whether espousing reasoning based on rules and duties (deontology), stressing the consideration of potential outcomes of actions (consequentialism), or aiming at the fulfillment of virtues such as trust (see Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2006a; Singer 1994; Wylie 2000). Beyond differences, traditional ethical theory has sought to develop the rational justification for a number of principles that may guide human action beyond the particular constraints of history and culture.

In Continental philosophy, Levinas, while rejecting founding values and principles, found the source for an ethical stance in the encounter with the irreducible “Other” (Bernasconi 1990: 75; Busch 1992). Ethical existence is prompted by the face of the Other, a phenomenological force that places a calling on us and by this calling reveals the existence of countless others (Levinas 1979: 234). This calling is by no means an opening for reciprocity: ethical action is independent of retribution (Bernasconi 1988: 234). For Levinas, the ethical signification of the Other contests the primacy of ontology and makes of ethics a “first philosophy” (Levinas 1990: 75–87, 1988: 128). Yet Merleau-Ponty’s (1995: 130–35) phenomenology challenges the self/other binary while offering elements for a profoundly ethical practice. By disclosing the ultimate intersubjective nature of the world and its products, Merleau-Ponty unveils the situated, constituted contingency of subjects whose “lived intelligibility” does not require eternal essences or principles (Flay 1990: 157) as it is constructed and experienced through the interaction with other beings and phenomena, whether visible or invisible.

Perhaps we should neither fear the absence of consensus in the field of ethics nor harbor the fantasy that conflictive situations may ever achieve a final moral equilibrium. The universal and the particular need each other for existence, and political life is about defining what the exact content of the “universal” may be under changing circumstances (Laclau 1993: 30–35, 49–51). Ethical existence means embracing conflict and contradiction as the fertile field for new and ever-changing social creations (de Beauvoir 1994: 120, 154). One may ask what landscape archaeology can do to reshape this terrain.

Landscape archaeology is a unique medium to develop practices toward a truly relational ethics, because it requires the understanding of historically specific ecological ways of knowing the world that unfold from the transformation of material forms by human practice (Balée and Erickson 2006: 9; Tilley 1994: 23). Furthermore, the archaeology involved with landscapes looks not only at landforms and human constructions but also at the material links between places and beings (imaginary or concrete) that build the specific fabric of a landscape as a deep-time spatial formation (Andrews et al. 2000; see Lazzari 2005).

It should be noted that the critical review of the principled and professionalized approach to ethics does not imply the rejection of guiding principles as reflexive aids (Hall 2005: 185; Meskell 2005b: 83; Meskell and Pels 2005: 8–9). Professional guidelines for engaging ethically with landscape research are particularly necessary in contexts where institutions that guarantee social justice are weak or underdeveloped for political and/or economic reasons, with the subsequent undermining of community, environmental and scientific values. As it can be seen in northwestern Argentina these days, it is often because of the damage caused by modern mining exploitation by transnational companies that consciousness about landscape as a cultural-natural spatial unity of deep temporality tends to become explicit, both among local communities and archaeologists. Such guidelines are also necessary in countries with long histories of institutional stability, since it is often in these contexts where alternative decision-making processes and social practices are usually at odds with national legal apparatuses (see papers Harrison et al. 2005; Lilley 2000; Watkins 2002). In this global context, the collective production and ongoing revision of professional guidelines can contribute to the development of legal and academic practices that are more sensitive than national and international legal apparatuses are to the multiple ways of managing and valuing landscapes that coexist in modern states (e.g., Goodall 2006; Goodall et al. 2007).
The Interfaces of Landscape

Landscapes mediate the dialectical relationship between various domains of reality (Palang and Fry 2003: 2) and may therefore help convert such notions as decisions, rights, and duties into fully intersubjective social phenomena. Useful for the naturalization of social orders based on the yearning for older ways of life (Dorrian and Rose 2003: 15; A. Smith 1986), the “aura” of landscapes certainly helps both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic projects (Scham 2003). However, landscapes are neither homogeneous nor static. Not only may multiple spatialities coexist in any given landscape (Erickson 2006: 348; Lefebvre 1991: 86–87; Munn 1996: 462; see Strang’s chapter on “uncommon ground,” this volume, and Russell, this volume), but landscapes are also always infused by movement. Moving bodies (for example, people, objects, animals, and so on) perpetually shape the boundaries of landscapes and their conceptualizations (Bender 2001: 7). Like “culture” (Cowan et al. 2001), landscapes may be better viewed as a hybrid spaces of belonging with very porous boundaries.

Tracing the lived experience of people in particular landscapes provides evidence of how places and identities elude taxonomies (Byrne 2003; McBryde 1997; Meskell 2005b). This conclusion is often at odds, though, with heritage laws designed under positivist legal paradigms. In the political economy of heritage (Carman 2005), such rules promote the performance of authenticity, expressed in the compulsory requirement of demonstrating “proof” of cultural inheritance, purity, and attachment (Lilley and Williams 2005). Additionally, the removal of locations and features deemed “irrelevant” from heritage listings (Byrne 1996, 1997; Harrison and Williamson 2004; Korstanje and García Azcárate 2007; Little 2005; see Byrne, this volume) helps perpetuate dominant historical narratives and exemplifies the selective nature of hegemonic memory practices that fashion particular landscapes. Non-academic concerns about landscapes (e.g., see Bradley, this volume) may not easily be translated into standard research frameworks, in turn complicating the building of archaeological methodologies that are sensitive to those concerns (Budlwa 2005). Difficulties notwithstanding, the addressing of non-academic concerns about landscape may be one of the most significant endeavors of contemporary archaeology (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2006b; Endere and Curtoni 2006: 200–365; Smith and Wobst 2005; Watkins 2003). This may be part of governance alienated native peoples from their lands. In countries such as Australia, addressing this challenge has resulted in fruitful alternatives to the “stakeholders of the past” model, through different instances of partnership that look for points of commensurability between Indigenous and Western epistemologies (McNiven and Russell 2005: 235–36). Although commensurability might be an elusive quest, intelligibility is possible across frameworks (see Lucas 2005: 66), as people participate simultaneously in multiple orders of signification and value. Archaeological practice understood as a “partnership” between “host and guests” refuses to assign equal value to all stakeholders by establishing the primacy of Indigenous interests and claims. Simultaneously, this approach challenges the assumption that the perspectives of archaeologists and Indigenous peoples are essentially different; an assumption that may lead to the unproductive expectation that archaeological research will necessarily be different if conducted by Indigenous people (McNiven and Russell 2005: 10; see also Korstanje 2005).

Probably nothing exemplifies better the coexistence of multiple understandings than the intertwining of landscape and collective memory. Küchler (1993) distinguishes between landscapes of memory and landscapes as memory. The first consists of inscriptions of the land by means, for instance, of the construction of monuments. The second involves the shaping of a land through incorporation of habitual practices of memory-work. This distinction does not necessarily equate with the Western/non-Western dichotomy, because these kinds of memory-work may coexist in any topography, past or present. We should also be alert to the interplay of these two aspects under specific circumstances, and to the kind of social projects they have sustained.

A case study from Argentina (Curtoni et al. 2003) may serve to illustrate this interplay. The various phases of the ongoing struggle over the reinterpretation of the 19th-century war with the native population of the Pampa and Patagonia areas (wastelands by European and Criollo standards) have shaped the landscape where one of the decisive battles of that war has been assumed to have occurred. Artifacts of memory have been placed there by different social groups with competing claims: a monolith, a monument, and a reburial mausoleum in the shape of a pyramid. The last is an ambiguous artifact built by the reemergent Rankülche, an Indigenous group that had until recently been considered almost “extinct” (A. Lazzari 2003). The artifact/mausoleum inscribes the land with the skull of Chief Mariano Rosas, the recovered ancestor, thereby reestablishing his selective nature of hegemonic memory practices particularly so in countries where violent technologies and Wobst 2005; Watkins 2003). This may be part of
ing the Rankülche’s severed link with the land by means of fixing the meaning of the surroundings. It may be argued that the Rankülche are participating in the logic of the landscape of memory, trapped in the genealogical and “positive proof” discourse that the state imposes onto those who claim recognition. However, landscapes are fields of relations, textured by connections, ebbs and flows anchored in strong points—themselves the effect of a bundle of relations—such as monuments and artifacts (Lefebvre 1991: 85–86, 222). The participants in this commemoration also performed other spatial practices. They undertook a long-distance pilgrimage to bring back to the burial ground the skull of the chief that had so far been kept in a national museum, and they built temporary tentlike structures to present various forms of memory-work during annual festivals performed around the mausoleum. These spatial practices signal that this is a landscape as memory, a work of the art of remembrance in progress. However, the first aspect, the performance of the landscape of memory, is not less “authentic.” Spatial inscriptions are concrete representations (Soja 1996: 46), primary components of Indigenous peoples’ lived existence both within and in spite of contemporary nation states.

It should be said that this case is not mentioned here as example of an ethically engaged landscape archaeology. As the authors acknowledged (Curtoni et al. 2003 200–365), the article only aimed at demonstrating the richness and potential of interdisciplinary perspectives on landscapes, hitherto unexplored in their country. Yet it serves to demonstrate that although modernity relegated the landscape to the role of background or scenery, it is only by fully acknowledging its powerful constitutive agency that we may be able to create an ethical project open to difference. Indigenous peoples and archaeologists undertaking collaborative projects (e.g., Erickson 2006; Ferguson and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2006; Fordred Green et al. 2003; Lilley and Williams 2005) find themselves subverting the objectified notions of landscape to which they have been exposed in radically different ways (for example, as subjecting ideology, as toolkit for valid knowledge-building). This joint unlearning and relearning through lived landscape archaeology perhaps best illustrates what an ethical practice may be: the unfolding of an embodied intelligibility that discloses itself after the meeting of various forms of knowledge, wisdom, practices, and imaginations. While agreeing with the dialogical model of ethical practice espoused by recent anthropological works, landscape archaeology moves beyond discursive paradigms by forcefully showing that dialogues transformative acts are prompted by people’s experiences of particular topographies within multiple value regimes, understandings and expectations: academic, communal, religious, political, legal, to name just a few. More than any other spatial formation, landscapes are good examples of what Lefebvre (1991: 33) named “lived spaced” (or “thirdspace” for Soja 1996): the space of possibilities, the best testimony of the indeterminacy of social existence.

As human/nonhuman artifacts, landscapes stress the production of knowledge as part of engagement and relationality, as the outcome, in other words, of practicing bodies immersed in material and meaningful geographies. As metaphor for the theoretical/ethical topography, landscape calls us to move beyond entrenched notions of positions and understandings as comparable to self-contained and essentially different “points on a map” (Palang and Fry 2003). Landscapes call us to see these different understandings as a continuum of affordances that make possible different social projects in the contemporary world. These projects may seek different and even opposite goals, yet the various undercurrents (for example, material, informative, experiential, political) that connect people with one another and with places give landscapes—metaphoric and material—their particular character.

References


