Beauty for Ever?

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ABSTRACT: This paper is not primarily about the philosophy of beauty with regard to landscape evaluation. Neither is it basically about the place of aesthetics in environmental philosophy. Rather, its aim is to argue that while aesthetics has a clear role to play, it cannot form the basis of an adequate environmental philosophy without presupposing that natural processes and their products have no role to play independent of the human evaluation of them in terms of their beauty. The limitations, especially of a subjective aesthetics, are brought out through examining the decision of the National Trust in the Lake District to restore Yew Tree Tarn, thereby 'to ensure its beauty will be *permanent*'. But should a landscape (an ecosystem for that matter) be 'frozen' against natural changes in order that its beauty be preserved 'permanently'? If not, what counter principle(s) can one invoke to argue against such a philosophy of management or at least to limit such intervention in its name? The National Trust is committed 'to preserving the beauty and unique character of the Lake District'. Its unique character includes its geological formations which make the area beautiful. But geological processes are dynamic. Should their products necessarily be subordinated to aesthetic considerations? If so, are they not in danger of being treated like a work of art, an artefact which we, humans, are entitled to preserve against change? In a conflict between the requirement of conserving beauty of the landscape on the one hand and natural processes at work which might undermine that beauty on the other, should aesthetic considerations always have priority? This paper will explore these related issues. However, the restoration of Yew Tree Tarn as opposed to the failure in Yosemite to intervene to prevent one of its lakes from drying out are merely used as handy examples to lead into such theoretical exploration which should, most certainly, not be interpreted as a general indictment of the overall management policies of the National Trust on the one hand, or endorsement of those of the Yosemite National Park on the other.

KEYWORDS: natural beauty, geological processes/products, subjective aesthetics, nature as a work of art

Environmental Values **4** (1995): 213-25

On a very brief visit to Yosemite in 1993, the official literature about the park informed us what we were likely to see. Along one route, it indicated, one would come to a lake. However, it warned that one might well be disappointed to find something less than what one would expect a lake to be. This was because certain natural processes are at work which lead to the lake shrinking and eventually transforming itself into a meadow. Indeed, other meadows in the immediate area are the result historically of similar transformations. It does not refer to any management policy which explicitly aims at stalling or interfering with such a natural transformation.[1]

In 1994, I received an appeal from the National Trust with particular regard to its work in the Lake District. The leaflet says: 'The National Trust has undertaken to do all we can to *preserve* the landscape: repairing footpaths, dry stone walls and fences; managing woodlands, lakes, shorelines and rivers to protect precious wildlife habitats; and improving access and facilities so all types of visitor can enjoy the beauty at first hand.'

In particular, under lake management, the leaflet has two pictures of Yew Tree Tarn (NY 322005) – the 'before' photograph shows it drained because of an underground fault and the other, as it is now, after restoration. The text says: 'The National Trust has now built a dam to prevent the tarn from draining, and the area has been landscaped to ensure its beauty will be *permanent*.' (The emphasis is not mine.)

The contrast between what seems to be happening in Yosemite and what has happened recently in the Lake District is striking and worth exploring in order to clarify what appears to be two very different philosophies of park management and two possibly different perspectives in environmental philosophy.[2]

One obvious difference between Yosemite and the Lake District should be commented on immediately so as to get it out of the way as a potential red herring. The former is, by and large, what is known as a wilderness, a place relatively untouched by human impact, both historically and now. The latter is, more or less, a humanised landscape in which the natural and the human contributions have become so melded together that it is difficult at times to separate the two. The dry stone walls, for instance, mentioned in the National Trust leaflet, have a reasonably long history in that part of the British Isles, and have become part and parcel of the Lake District landscape. Hill sheep grazing by farmers, which is intimately connected with the presence of stone walls, itself, has also contributed to the character of this region.

But in spite of such a profound difference, the two areas have been made into national parks[3]. However, the legislation and its implications governing the operation of such parks are not identical in the two countries. Three primary reasons were explicitly given for the establishment of Yellowstone as a national park in the USA – geological, aesthetic interests as well as being a preserve for wild animals. In the case of Yosemite, no explicit justifications have been

unearthed but they would have been similar except that, unlike Yellowstone, it is a botanical preserve, particularly for the giant sequoias (Hargrove 1989: 92). Aesthetic and wildlife considerations are explicitly mentioned in the remit of the National Trust. But geological considerations are not but may obliquely be indicated by a reference to the 'natural aspect, features' of the land under its care.[4]

Of the three justifications identified, the ones which this article will focus on are the aesthetic and the geological and the relationship between them. The question to ponder is this: although both Yosemite and the Lake District are protective of both, why is there, nevertheless, a difference in their respective management policies? The leaflet cited earlier urges donors to support the National Trust in its efforts 'to preserve its [the Lake District's] unique character and beauty'. In the space of a very small publication, the permanent preservation of its beauty is emphasised several times.[5] This may give a clue as to the unease this author feels about the philosophy of management implicit in the National Trust as a conservation body.

The 'permanent preservation' of a place of unique beauty may legitimately be understood in the following way – a conservation body which has custody of such a place ought to do all it can to prevent economic developments which would destroy its beauty or detract from it. Such concern may also extend to the already humanised aspects of its landscape. Hill sheep grazing and dry stone walling are two features already mentioned which contribute to the distinctive character and beauty of the area. Indeed, as we all know, hill sheep grazing is not, from the point of view of strict economic efficiency, a viable activity. Without subsidies, it would be largely abandoned, thus altering the distinctive character of the region. As the leaflet rightly points out, even so, severe economic pressures push the small sheep farmers to cut more and more corners. Farm hands are laid off, whose jobs used to include maintaining dry stone walls, hedges, fences and bridges, all of which go to sustain the landscape so much cherished as a national heritage.[6] As a result, increasingly, repair is no longer done and the skills for such work lost. The National Trust and other conservation bodies like the Friends of the Lake District have the enormous task of stepping into the breach.

The Trust is right, too, to be vigilant about the damage that is caused by the numerous visitors who are attracted to the Lakes each year particularly during the summer season. Even the most ecologically-friendly and sensitive type of visitor like the hill walker is not immune to this charge. Footpaths constantly trampled upon by walking boots erode away. Without careful management, constant maintenance and repair, such paths rapidly become not only unusable but also unlovely.

There is no doubt that such stirling work is urgently needed and the National Trust is to be applauded for giving these tasks its utmost priority. One's qualms are not addressed to such matters. Instead, they are directed at another aspect of its work, when it is apparently extended to 'freezing' and preserving permanently what it considers to be the distinctive character and beauty of the place

when the contribution to that character and beauty comes from nature and not from humans.

Even in a severely humanised landscape, such as the Lake District, there are fundamental elements to its character which owe nothing to human but to natural agencies. Its geological and geomorphological features cannot be said to be the result of human impact and creativity. The natural landscape as it has come to be what it is today is the product of several series of geological, climatological and other processes at work (Moseley 1990; British Regional Geology: Northern England 1971; Trueman 1980). Its rock formations are dominated by rocks of Lower Palaezoic age, with the oldest – the Skiddaw Slates – being at least of Ordovician age, that is, five hundred million years old. That was a world with no land vegetation. Most reconstructions of it show an ancient ocean (Iapetus) with England, Wales and Southern Ireland on its south-eastern margin, and Scotland and Northern Ireland on the other side of the waters. The Skiddaw Slates are formed of mudstone, siltstone and minor sandstone deposited in a marine environment. The next major geological occurrence was the formation of the Borrowdale Volcanic rocks – the green slates from Honister Crag above Buttermere (which form excellent roofing material) may be traced to volcanic explosions of the time. These volcanic rocks form mountains like Helvellyn, Scafell, Great Gable and the Langdale Pikes. The overlying Coniston Limestone turns out to have an exaggerated influence on the scenery of the Lake District – in spite of the soil being acidic, lime-loving plants flourish because of the limestones, thus giving a lush vegetation cover to the narrow band of land running north-eastwards from the Duddon valley through Coniston, Tarn Hows and Waterhead to beyond Troutbeck, providing a striking contrast to the rugged volcanic terrain of the central Lake District and marking the boundary between it and the more subdued relief of the Silurian rocks to the south. Following a break in deposition, Carboniferous rocks were deposited on the older Silurian and Ordovician rocks. There are no Jurassic, Cretaceous or Tertiary rocks in the Lake District.

The mountains of the Lake District in their present form are primarily the result of the glaciers of the Quarternary ice ages. So are its lakes, its tarns, though not its rivers, which were in place long before the onset of the Ice Age. Kentmere, in pre-glacial times, was a winding valley. But ice action has excavated it some 200 to 300 feet deeper into a canal-like form, creating at the same time the crags of Froswick, Rainsborrow and Raven Cragg. Buttermere and Crummock are perfect examples of ice action which resulted in the creation of lakes. Smaller glaciers occurring in the final stages of glaciation created corries or cirques, semi-circular basins high on the hillsides. In some of these are small lakes or tarns, Red Tarn on the east side of Helvellyn being such a corrie lake. In some cases the tarns were formed by the excavating action of the ice, in others, by the damming of shallow valleys by the moraines. Some tarns outflow over such a morainic dam; others cut a channel through solid rock providing a lower exit than the moraine itself.

However, the geological processes behind the creation of all these formations are dynamic in character – over time, they may lead to dramatic changes and totally different configurations. All natural physical objects are changing in accordance with the principles of uniformitarian geology. But lakes and tarns, relatively speaking, succumb to change faster than mountains and hills. To quote one geologist (Trueman 1980: 251):

> Lakes are indeed only temporary features in a landscape, and their abundance in parts of Britain, mostly as a result of the Ice Age, emphasizes the short time that has since elapsed. Ultimately most of these lakes must disappear, either by becoming filled up with alluvium or by the cutting of an outlet which allows the drainage of the waters. ... pro-glacial lakes of the closing stages of the Ice Age were drained by the latter method in other parts of England; the silting up of the lakes has also been completed in some cases, notably in Kentmere valley, north-west of Kendal, where two lakes, each rather over a mile in length, have been silted up; the upper lake, dammed by a moraine, caught most of the sediment brought down the valley, and is filled by alluvium;...

At the moment, technology does not permit us to arrest or alter geological processes in any effective way. However, although we are not capable of large-scale intervention upon the landscape, we are competent to tamper on a limited scale. And it is the very possibility of piecemeal engineering which appears to have presented itself as irresistible to the National Trust. The leaflet says that Yew Tree Tarn was draining away because of an underground fault. It does not say whether the fault is human-made or natural. It is reasonable to assume the latter is the case. Its occurrence, then, is part of the dynamic character of geological forces which over time would lead not only to the tarn drying out, but to other changes of which the disappearance of the tarn would only be a part.[7]

The tarn is clearly regarded by the National Trust and by the visitors to the area to form an integral part of the beauty of that area of the Lake District. Without the tarn(s) its beauty would be diminished and its visitors would derive less aesthetic satisfaction from their experience. To prevent that from happening, the Trust considers it right to take steps to prevent the tarn from draining away, thereby, ensuring 'its beauty will be *permanent*'. But is this the right decision for a conservation body to take? Should the Trust have allowed itself to succumb to the temptation of piecemeal engineering in order to achieve such a goal? Or should it have adopted the alternative policy to let the shrinking lake to leak, to become eventually, perhaps, a peat bog?

If it is correct to say that the geology of the Lake District forms part of the primary justification for the area being made a national park, then it looks as if that the National Trust in its policy-making (and by implication the National Park Authority for the region) does not consider those interests to be on a par with aesthetic ones. On the contrary, it implies that in a case of conflict between them, the latter shall take precedence over the former. The implication is sustained by a failure to distinguish between two things which geological concern about a

landscape could amount to – geology could be understood in a static as well as in a dynamic sense. Understood under the first aspect, one's concern is with structure, be it a mountain or a lake, as it exists here and now. But understood under the second aspect, one is not so much concerned with structure as with processes. While structure is more or less permanent, processes intrinsically involve change. At any one moment, changes to an existing structure may be infinitesimally small and imperceptible to the human observer. But over time and cumulatively, they can lead to major structural changes, which sometimes even involve a change of identity. This precisely was what was happening to Yew Tree Tarn before the decision to repair the underground fault it had developed – left to such processes of change, over a period of time, the tarn could have been transformed into something else. From a geological perspective, processes have an ontological priority over structures as the latter is the product of the former, although admitting this should not be taken as a denial that structures are of significance.

The extant geological structure of the tarn as a tarn, in this case, is of aesthetic interest, undoubtedly, to the Trust. But clearly, for the Trust, not all geological structures have aesthetic value or significance. What is of geological significance from the point of view of structure may or may not be of aesthetic interest. Moreover, in any case, geological processes in themselves have no direct aesthetic appeal. Admittedly, in an area like the Lake district, where geological processes have led to the creation of Helvellyn, Ullswater and such like, all three matters – geological structure and processes on the one hand and aesthetics on the other – happen to coincide. But certain geological processes at work could undermine structures which we, humans, deem to be of aesthetic value. This, precisely, appears to have taken place in the case of Yew Tree Tarn.

The word 'deem' is important and should be further explored. It intimates the historicity of the aesthetic experience as far as landscapes are concerned. Whether people consider a landscape to be beautiful is contextually dependent upon their history and culture. In the first half of the eighteenth century and earlier in England, the Lake District, the Derbyshire Peaks (also now a national park) and other similar parts of the country were perceived to be frightening and threatening, not beautiful. When the coaches passed through the Derbyshire Peaks, their drivers used to pull down the blinds so that their passengers would not see and be frightened by the landscape outside their windows. Daniel Defoe in *A Tour Through The Whole Island of Great Britain*, published in 1724-6, said, more than once, of the Dark Peaks that it was a 'howling wilderness'. He wrote in a similar vein about the Lake District: '... Westmoreland, a country eminent only for being the wildest, most barren and frightful of any that I have passed over in England, or even in Wales it self. ... But 'tis of no advantage to represent horror, as the character of a country, in the middle of all the frightful appearances to the right and left ...' Again: 'When we entered at the south part of this county, I began indeed to think of Merionethshire, and the mountains of Snowden in North

Wales, seeing nothing round me, in many places, but unpassable hills, whose tops, covered with snow, seemed to tell us all the pleasant part of England was at an end.' He and his party were greatly relieved to get to the Vale of Eden 'which is ... a very agreeable and pleasant country, or perhaps seems to be so the more, by the horror of the eastern and southern part.' Of the Forest of Bowland (he referred to the country around Lancaster) he said: 'Nor were these hills high and formidable, only but they had a kind of an unhospitable terror in them. Here were no rich pleasant valleys between them, as among the Alps; no lead mines and veins of rich ore, as in the Peak; no coal pits, as in the hills above Halifax, much less gold, as in the Andes, but all barren and wild, of no use or advantage either to man or beast.' (Defoe 1979: 549)

The forebears of today's visitors saw not beauty in its wildness but fear, horror and aversion. Defoe only felt safe and comfortable when he reached the domesticated and cultivated landscape of the low-lying plain and was only truly at home when he reached prosperous towns like Kirkby Launsdale (Lonsdale), Kendal and such like. The Lake District itself as a whole enters modern (English) consciousness as a beauteous place only since the so-called Romantic Period (in English literature) – the Lake Poets' celebrations of it acted as a powerful magnet and advertisement whose effect has not ceased even today. Their response articulated certain values and an attitude to nature which could be said to be a reaction to the onset and the penetration of industrialisation in England in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The spirit of Romanticism has succeeded in turning the Lake District into an embodiment of the 'Englishness' of the English countryside. It is in this sense that its perceived beauty has entered into today's conception of 'the National Heritage'. It is also as such that its beauty is conserved by the National Trust.

Ensuring the 'permanent' beauty of the tarn implies two things – that (a) geological considerations come second to aesthetic ones and (b) moreover, a particular conception of the 'Englishness' of the English countryside be also preserved for generations to come.

In other words, with regard to the second consideration, any other appreciation of the landscape could be regarded as deviant. It shuts out the possibility that there may, after all, be an element of validity to the pre-nineteenth century conception of the Lake District or the Derbyshire Moors. They may indeed be 'a howling wilderness' especially when experienced not during a fine English summer's day when visitors, on the whole, prefer to appreciate it while driving through in their cars. As such, they inspire not so much an experience of beauty, but one of awe, and indeed, even of muted fright and fear (which may not be so mute either when the wind starts up, the temperature drops and the fog suddenly descends with visibility reduced to barely six inches in front of one's nose). For such an appreciation, it matters not at all whether the tarn is there, brimful of water 'permanently', or whether it has been reduced to a bog-like pond on the way eventually to being transformed into a peat bog in centuries to come.

The National Trust may be in danger of conducting its work of conservation in the Lake District through a particular, specific set of cultural lenses overriding geological considerations. Most of the time, its policies will, no doubt, get things right. The beauty of the Lake District cannot permit certain sorts of land use – for instance, the Trust would, no doubt, resist what is called resourcism which regards the land as raw resources in plain economic terms – hence, no quarrying, no motorway, no large or obtrusive car park, no hypermarket.

Resourcism is a form of instrumentalism, that philosophical outlook which holds that humans alone have intrinsic value and that, therefore, nature only has instrumental value for us humans. It is this version of instrumentalism which the National Trust, as a conservation body, regards as its most dangerous enemy. This, as mentioned earlier, is a laudable priority. But if the Trust implies in its management policy that it is the only source of danger and combatting it, the only priority, then the Trust would be wrong. To see why it would be wrong, it is necessary to grasp that resourcism is not the only form of instrumentalism (see Lee 1993). There is at least one other which regards nature as a source of aesthetic satisfaction for us humans. The natural landscape as such has no intrinsic value – its value lies solely in enabling us, humans, to enyoy its beauty, that is to say, in affording us an aesthetic experience. So long as we find it beautiful or even awe-inspiring, it has instrumental value for us. But by the same token, should it lose that quality for us, it would then be devoid of value and may then even assume disvalue for us. The National Trust appears to assume that the landscape triggers off the aesthetic experience – it is not the landscape which is valuable *per se* but it is valuable only in so far as it affords us aesthetic experiences. In other words, on this view, fundamentally, it is the human experience which is of intrinsic value while the cause of it, that is, the landscape, is only of instrumental value to us humans.

Of these two forms of instrumentalism, the National Trust seems to regard the latter to be virtuous and the former unacceptable – in a conflict between the two, resource conservation must give way to what may be called aestheticism (a form of resource preservation). This paper does not dispute this particular priority *per se* but questions the presupposed unqualified virtue of aestheticism itself. In ensuring the tarn would remain 'permanently' beautiful to humans, the Trust is assuming two things – not only that the tarn physically must be 'frozen' but also that we, humans, would not alter our conception of beauty with regard to the landscape. If the latter assumption fails to be correct, the endeavour becomes irrelevant – should there be a reversion to the pre-industrialisation view of such landscapes on the part of our descendants, they would lose what aesthetic value they now have for us and would no longer be held valuable in the way we do.[8]

But as a necessary condition for ensuring that the present aesthetic response be maintained for posterity, physical, geological changes will have to be arrested if technology permits. This may be tantamount to moving from holding an

innocuous notion about natural beauty, namely, that a landscape may be beautiful, to an inappropriate notion of regarding such landscapes as 'works of art' itself. This amounts to confusing two very different categories of being.

Works of art are artefacts, not natural objects (see Lee 1994 and forthcoming b). An artefact is a deliberate human construct. Buildings, vehicles, sculptures, paintings are all artefacts. Some of these artefacts are so exquisitely executed that they are considered to be works of art. While all works of art are artefacts, not all artefacts are works of art. The great medieval cathedrals are one obvious type of aesthetic artefacts. To admire and to cherish them as works of art would commit us to doing all we can to protect them from destruction, damage and decay, whether these be brought about through natural or anthropogenic causes. Of course, all material things are subject to eventual decay but all the same, we ought to ensure that they last for as long as possible. If we cannot reduce the pollutants in the atmosphere which relentlessly erode the fabric of these structures, we might be forced to do something radical like encasing them within a bubble of clean air provided technology permits. If the original carvings and figures have to be replaced by new imitations, their beauty has become diminished, they are less than perfect.

As works of art are consciously designed, produced and maintained by humans for human ends and goals, they are also fit objects for humans to preserve from change and decay to the best of their technological ability. But natural physical objects are not human artefacts, even though it is true that, sometimes, humans also find them beautiful. They have come into existence neither as the result of human design and agency nor to fulfil human ends or purposes, although it is true that humans have found some of them very useful as means to achieve their own goals. It is a philosophical error to regard works of art and natural objects as belonging to the same ontological category or to reduce the latter to the category of the artefactual. What exists because of human volition is very different from what exists independent and regardless of human volition – works of art are paradigmatically the products of the human will while physical objects which form a landscape are the product of geological, geomorphological and climatological forces which paradigmatically belong to nature, not to culture.

To regard (certain) landscapes as 'nature's works of art' can, therefore, be philosophically very misleading if not handled with care. If the epithet were understood merely figuratively, as a manner of speaking, it is innocuous enough. But one is not justified in sliding from the fact that we, humans, do at times, find certain landscapes beautiful to implying that like beautiful aesthetic artefacts, they, too, should be protected from even non-anthropogenically-induced change so that we may continue to derive aesthetic satisfaction in their presence.

Change in nature is endemic and may be slow or abrupt. Geological changes of either kind throw up structures which alter the landscape. To arrest or deflect geological change where it could lead to unaesthetic or less aesthetic structures amounts to treating geological formations, the products of such processes of

change, as mere artefacts in the name of what is beautiful. It is, to adapt a phrase, 'to pervert the course of nature' in order to serve our human purposes and ends.

Such aestheticism, no less than crude resource conservation, are forms of instrumentalism, as we have seen. They are also forms of strong anthropocentrism, namely, that human consciousness is the sole source and locus of all values (Callicott 1986). All forms of instrumentalism are instantiations of strong anthropocentrism for they assume that ultimately it is the presence of humans with their particular consciousness which endows the world with value. As such, nature, independent of humans and their bestowal of values, is itself valueless. It follows that if humans find some parts of the natural world useful (or potentially useful) as factors of production and other parts capable (or potentially capable) of triggering aesthetic satisfaction in them, then and only then is nature valuable.

Strong anthropocentrism may also be used to distinguish the philosophy of conservationism from that of preservationism, a distinction which is germane to the discussion here. The latter may be said to challenge it in one way or other – minimally (as argued by Callicott) that although human consciousness may be the sole source of all values, it does not follow that human consciousness is the sole locus of intrinsic value.[9] If intrinsic value is itself defined minimally as non-instrumental value, it may be argued that nature not merely has instrumental value for us humans, but also intrinsic value as well.

In the light of the above analysis, it may be reasonable to characterise the National Trust's implicit philosophy of management as that of conservationism, not preservationism. Its version of conservationism differs from the more standard variety in that, as we have already seen, it does not condone resource conservation as a form of instrumentalism given that, in its eyes, aestheticism is virtuous and ought to have priority in a case of conflict between the two. The more standard view has its priorities the other way round – in a context of conflict, it is more likely to put resource conservation before aestheticism.

Passmore (1974) distinguishes conservationism from preservationism by saying that the former amounts to 'conserving for' and the latter 'preserving from'. Conservationism is said to take a longer term view of human interests, being concerned with posterity and with intergenerational justice. It, therefore, outlaws the short-term economic interests of one group in society, or of a particular generation of humans. For instance, a typical conservationist response to overfishing would be to ensure that no one group or generation take out so much from the fishery grounds as to cause a collapse in the fish population which would leave nothing for other groups or for other generations to follow – it canvasses for sustainable fishing in this sense. It also follows that a conservationist perspective would generate a management policy which sees to it that a lake with plenty of fish in it would not be allowed to dry out (assuming that extant technology could be of help) as the replacement of a lake by a reed bed or a meadow could mean the loss of a useful resource and be of less economic benefit both short and long term. But from the standpoint of preservationism, the

argument from resource conservation would not cut any ice – it would tolerate the natural drying out of the lake. Likewise, it would tolerate the natural drying out of the lake even when the instrumental value derived from the lake is not in terms of resource conservation but resource preservation, that is to say, to use the lake as an aesthetic resource, as both resource conservation and resource preservation are aspects of the philosophy of conservationism.

As the National Trust and by implication, the National Park Authority in the Lake District appear to condone human intervention to prevent natural change in order to maintain the landscape's ability to trigger the right aesthetic experience, they may be said to put in practice the philosophy of conservationism rather than preservationism. On the other hand, the Yosemite National Park appears to be adhering to the latter as it has not seen fit to engage in piecemeal engineering to prevent the lake from drying out and transforming itself into a meadow. From this difference in policy, one might infer that as far as the National Trust and the Lake District National Park are concerned, nature has no intrinsic but only instrumental value for us humans, while this is not necessarily so in the case of the Yosemite National Park.

NOTES

[1] Of course, a meadow might be deemed to be as beautiful as a lake. So the natural transformation of the latter to become the former might not be a case of a conflict between aesthetic requirements and natural processes which could undermine the beauty of the landscape.

[2] I have searched for an explicit systematic 'manifesto' on the philosophy of management of the countryside amongst the publications of the National Trust but without real success. However, I consulted six of its publications (all generously provided by its Archive and Library staff upon request) which do have some bearing on the matter. These are *The National Trust: An Introduction* (1993), *The National Trust: Access and Conservation* (1992), *The National Trust and Woodlands* (1992), *The National Trust: Gardens and Landscape Parks* (1992), *The National Trust: Enterprise Neptune* (1993) and a brief one-page pamphlet. The last mentioned sets out its aims and objectives by quoting an Act of Parliament in 1907 setting out the Trust's terms: 'The National Trust shall be established for the purposes of promoting the permanent preservation for the benefit of the nation of lands and tenements (including buildings) of beauty or historic interest and as regards lands for the preservation (so far as practicable) of their natural aspect, features and animal and plant life.' (The full title of the Trust is: The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty.) As far as the countryside is concerned – see in particular the second mentioned leaflet – the Trust rightly sees its primary duty as preservation and is committed to this taking precedence over public access. It also mentions the need to preserve the quality of experience which the countryside provides for people: 'It must foster the essential character of its lands – their tranquillity, their remoteness and all that contributes to their beauty.' Furthermore, it is keenly concerned about the fact that increasing numbers of visitors could put undue pressure upon wildlife habitats. It is clearly sensitive to 'the basic need to balance the requirements of the visitor with those

of the environment so that visitors do not unwittingly destroy the very qualities which they come to enjoy'. The Enterprise Neptune pamphlet says that one of its three main objectives is 'to acquire unspoilt coastline for permanent preservation and public access'. It mentions that '[o]f a total of approximately 3,000 miles of coast [in England, Wales and Northern Ireland], about one-third was already developed beyond the possibility of conservation. A further third was judged to be of little scenic or recreational importance. But the remaining third – something over 900 miles altogether – was of outstanding natural beauty and worthy of permanent preservation.'

However, none of the pamphlets consulted mention a role that natural processes (as distinct from natural beauty which these processes may throw up), such as geological (or ecological) ones, should play in their management policies. But at the VIth International Congress of Ecology held in Manchester in August 1994, to my delight, Dr H.J. Harvey, Chief Adviser on nature conservation in the National Trust, who was in the audience when a version of this paper was delivered, was able to assure me that the issue about the role of natural processes in management decisions is increasingly being discussed and appreciated within his organisation. He has since very kindly sent me a copy of his paper on that very subject – entitled 'The National Trust and Nature Conservation: Prospects for the Future' – which formed part of a seminar held, I believe, within the National Trust in June 1994. This initiative and similar ones within the Trust would no doubt ultimately be reflected in actual management decisions when the ideas behind them become more widely known and accepted. Furthermore, the day immediately after the delivery of the paper, *The Guardian* on 23rd August 1994 reported that the National Trust in Porlock Bay, Exmoor argued in favour of letting the sea reclaim land, which for generations have been defended from coastal erosion, on the grounds that natural processes should be allowed to continue their course. However, although the decision turns out to be controversial for other reasons, the case does not appear to involve a conflict between aesthetic considerations on the one hand and natural processes at work which might undermine its beauty on the other.

This sense of 'preservation' amounts to resource preservation (the landscape is simply perceived as an aesthetic resource) and should not be confused with that sense used at the end of this paper when the distinction between the philosophy of preservationism and that of conservationism is raised. The National Trust's use of 'preservation' as resource preservation falls within the latter philosophy rather than the former – while preservationism attributes intrinsic value to the nonhuman natural world, conservationism regards it as having only instrumental value for humans, whether as material, psychological, intellectual or spiritual benefits.

[3] The National Trust owns a considerable portion of the land which makes up the Lake District National Park. As a landowner, the National Trust would presumably have to get planning permission from the National Park Authority (and other relevant bodies) should it seek to do anything to the landscape. From this, one may infer that the Lake District National Park Authority would have endorsed the National Trust policy of dealing with leaking tarns like Yew Tree Tarn. The reservation about the latter aired in this paper would *ipso facto* apply to the former.

[4] See note 2 for details. The Trust may bear geological considerations in mind but this should not be confused with a concern for geological processes at work. The former clearly enters into its conception of beauty in the countryside. But the latter could alter the landscape in such a way as to render them no longer beautiful. That is one of the crucial points this paper focuses on.

[5] I admit this is only fund-raising literature whose language should not be taken too seriously. Yet other literature available to the public, including the Act of Parliament in 1907 which sets out the aims of the Trust, consistently uses the expression 'permanent preservation'.

[6] Damage goes further than the merely aesthetic aspect – the dilapidated state of some of these structures no longer form an effective barrier to the passage of sheep. These grazing animals are free to wander off in all directions, invading the adjacent habitats of wildlife, upsetting their delicate internal ecological balance.

[7] Chris Smout of Scottish Natural Heritage, in a personal communication, has kindly informed me that through a chance meeting with the National Trust archaeologist in the Lake District, he was told that (a) the original tarn was a natural, though much smaller tarn, (b) Yew Tree Tarn in its present form is a man-made one, and (c) the leak that was plugged was in the dam. This information, however, does not necessarily undermine the theoretical point that is being made in this paper, namely, that lakes and tarns, left to themselves in the absence of anthropogenic intervention of any kind would eventually dry out and evolve into other geological forms.

[8] However, there is another way of understanding aesthetics in nature – what is sometimes called positive aesthetics (Hargrove 1992: 165-205). But it is not the conception implied by the policies pursued by the National Trust.

[9] Rolston in turn challenges Callicott's distinction – see Rolston 1988: 112-17. Lee (forthcoming a) attempts to reconcile Callicott's and Rolston's positions.

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