**Landscape and Dwelling**

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Landscape is a ’picture representing natural inland scenery’ (Oxford Concise Dictionary of English Etymology). This means that a landscape has a representational value in relation to the physical content of what is ‘depicted’. It also means that we cannot talk of a landscape beyond human interference. We make, produce and represent landscapes using natural made and human made components, and we set these arrangements or sceneries into speech or other types of representations. Landscapes are human creations wherein we layer our intentions in relation to a magnitude and multitude of meanings and understandings. In this sense landscapes are often characterized by being made of cultural strata that to some extent resembles historical and natural geological strata.

There is a clear distinction and dialectics between nature and landscape, where nature is both encompassing and engulfed in landscapes. Nature, in its essence, transcends landscapes by existing beyond our knowledge of it and at the same time it is compartmentalized, fragmented and utilized as ingredient in landscapes. It is the question whether the transcendental and pre-conditional existence and quality of nature is still at hand, because human species have managed to colonize major part of the surface of the earth and such a thing as ‘unspoiled nature’ or genuine/original nature is hard to find wherever we look. Carolyn Merchant declared the *Death of Nature* as we began our colonizing work by the introduction of the modern scientific paradigm in the 17th century. By the aid of technology in various guises we have managed to invade nature in all its elements and on all levels. We have set nature into representational pictures, sentences and formulas. It is the question whether the essential original reading of nature as being something outside of us is still true, because what characterizes contemporary understanding of nature manifests as utilitarian and representational. In this way landscape has paradoxically become synonymous to nature when dealing with nature as geographical and topographical entity, but nevertheless still persists a rather Romantic understanding of nature as something outward, bigger and stronger than us.

Dwelling is the former principle of architecture in relation to nature. Dwelling creates shelter for temperature, wind, light and rain, which are all elements of nature. It protects us from the intemperance of nature and in this way the shelter creates a distinction to nature. Dwellings are on an ontological level relational to nature by being both part of and made of natural elements, and at the same time it stands out as alien to the ways and means of nature itself. We may be inspired by nature when we construct our dwellings, which was the case of the French Marc-Antoine Laugier in *Essai sur l’Architecture* (1753). In the primitive hut are present, according to Laugier, the eminent principles of architecture stripped to the bone and carried forward by a strong and impressive representation, which is still referred to in any class on theory, philosophy and history of architecture.

Dwellings are as well how we are in the world and how we relate to reality. Dwellings are cultural and social entities that speak and represent this being-in-the-world and as such dwellings are integrated and inseparable from landscapes. This phenomenological and contextual reading of existential dwelling remains in the core of this presentation and leads to the question that I shall try to elaborate upon: “How to dwell in a landscape?”

In 1951 Martin Heidegger, originally a student in theology, (1889-1976) publishes a collection of essays on “Woodpaths” (Holzwege). In the essays he clarifies the nature of the forest and how we gain knowledge and understanding of the forest by following paths and structures that are determined by the forest itself (and not by planners constructing paths for leisure, walks and a like). Heidegger has a point about the paths in the wood that is quite intriguing in a discussion concerning the meaning of nature in Western culture, science and philosophy. He writes: “Wood” is an old name for forest. In the wood are paths that mostly wind along until they end quite suddenly in an impenetrable thicket. They are called “woodpaths”. Each goes its peculiar way, but in the same forest. Often it seems as though one were identical to another. Yet it only seems so. Woodcutters and foresters are familiar with these paths. They know what it means to be on a “woodpath” (Heidegger 1950/1993:34). In the text Heidegger makes the term “Holz” (wood) synonymous to “Wald” (forest), where the materialistic and specific become equal to the general. We shall return to the hybrid meaning of language and etymology in the intriguing work of Heidegger when it comes to actual dwelling and building.

According to Heidegger the apparent dead-ends and cul-de-sacs (or “Holzwege”) of the forest tell us something about processes and procedures of thought and existence. The woodpath is the way we, in our everyday existence, appropriate events and situations that are out of our immediate control. According to Heidegger this counts as well for processes and procedures of more systemic character like for instance the rehearsal and performance of a symphony orchestra, or the practices of the scientist in the laboratory. We create meaning in retracing our actions and reflections on the path, and understanding comes through familiarity, practice and process.

The building is according to Heidegger a specific and primary way and mean of being-in-the-world. It is through building and dwelling that I am, you are and we are in the world, and we would not be if it were not for this ability to build and dwell. But building and dwelling is not a simple conjuncture of elements that forms a clear unified and general whole, which enables us to interact appropriately with the world, hence think; but rather a dynamic, multiple and complicated ‘gathering’ of entities and elements that in becoming a ‘thing’ undergoes physical transformation and change. It is in this process of walking the ‘path’ and becoming familiar with the ‘thing’ through everyday use that he the world discloses it self for us.

It is important on this occasion to clarify upon what a ‘thing’ is in a Heideggerian vocabulary, and furthermore to elaborate on current re-interpretations upon the potency of ‘things’ in relation to our dealing with the complexity of contemporary society. According to Heidegger a ‘thing’ is the opposite of an object and in placing this dichotomy he directly poses critique on the scientific strive toward objectification and neutral distance, and in relation to architecture he criticizes the de-contextualization and scientism of modernism. It is emblematic on this behalf that Heidegger never mentions the term architecture when it comes to the core essence of building, dwelling and ‘things’. Actually he is quite negative when it comes to architecture as a concept and term: “…the erecting of buildings cannot be understood adequately in terms of either architecture or engineering construction, nor in terms of mere combination of the two” (Heidegger 1971:159). Heidegger is almost provocative as he addresses the (missing) potentials of architecture when it comes to set the rules and concepts for building and writes: “…thinking about building (which is integrated part of the process) does not presume to discover architectural ideas, let alone give rules for building” (Heidegger 1971:145). (my bracket) It is in our construction and interaction with ‘things’ that they unveil there existential being for us and become integrated part of us and our being-in-the-world, this is what constitutes to double movement of here and there, inwards and outwards that is present in all ‘things’ and becomes, in Heidegger’s terms, the ‘thingness’ of the ‘thing’.

A ‘thing’, as already mentioned, consists of four folds: earth, sky, immortals and mortals, and there is a connection and progression in between the folds. The *earth* that shows itself in the ‘thing’ both tied to matter (soil) and existing on the earth as a planet, which means governed by the rules of the earth like gravitation and the like. The *sky* is both the physical sky above our heads with what the sky beholds as physical entity and at the same time heaven and our metaphysical constructs in that meaning. The *immortals* or Gods are emphasizing the fact that a metaphysical and transcendental quality is present in the ‘thing’ as it shows itself for us, but at the same time the term points toward the divine as expression for beauty and grace, or perhaps even better toward Edmund Burke’s definition of the sublime. The *mortals*, which are the human beings on earth, under the sky and in contact with the gods, are intentional beings that measure themselves in relation to death and set boundaries for being in accordance to the relationship with the ‘thingness’ of ‘things’. We are not outside of the *earth*, the *sky* and the *immortals*, but interactive and integrated part of the whole. The critique of Heidegger in relation to 20th century scientism is that we have placed ourselves in this isolated and distanced position in relation to the other folds of the world and the ‘thing’, and hence become out of touch and out of tune with that very same world. The four folds in the ‘thing’ have further properties when it comes to how we interact with them through use and appropriation.

The *earth* as matter and planet we address through saving, nurturing and caring. The *sky* as sun, rain, wind and air, and heaven above we address by receiving and encountering. The *immortals* as deities or gods, and principle of the divine we address by patiently and peacefully awaiting and attending. The *mortals*, ourselves, we address by initiating, walking and progressing in time and space. The ‘thing’ gathers the four folds and it is in the gathering that meaning and understanding are and become.

I have focused upon the potentials of phenomenology and post-phenomenological critique in relation to dwelling and how dwelling is interdependent with both the inhabitant and the context. Dwelling and building are intertwined and procedural in their interrelationship, and they interact simultaneously as we walk on the ‘woodpath’. We do not build in order to dwell, but measure poetically the context of which we are part, and thus already are in the phase of dwelling whilst we build. Our body scheme is the rod for measurement and this rod is characterized by a ‘hybrid imagination’ or ‘intentional multi-stability’ wherein a myriad of folds are gathered. The gathering of folds constitutes the ‘thing’, which seemingly can be seen as random and relative, but through *skhema* and *intentional being* we are capable of directing our actions in certain directions, hence making way for the concepts of concern, nurture, care and sustainability in our constructs.

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