

Editorial

The growing amount of anthologies, monographs, and textbooks shows that environmental aesthetics is a discipline, which has indeed come of age. For a long time the discipline lay at the outskirts of philosophical aesthetics, but from the beginning of the 1960s interest in it began to grow rapidly, and it has now evolved into a respectable philosophical discipline with a specific set of core issues and interesting debates. The “Environment, Aesthetics, and the Arts” conference arranged in Lahti, Finland in June 2010, in co-operation by the Nordic Society of Aesthetics, the Finnish Society of Aesthetics, and the International Institute of Applied Aesthetics, was devoted to the latest developments in environmental aesthetics. And the papers presented at the conference reinforced the picture of environmental aesthetics as a legitimate part of philosophical aesthetics. This special issue of *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* collects some of the best papers from the conference.

In the first essay, Karsten Harries asks “What Need is There for an Environmental Aesthetics?” He brings a strong historical dimension to the discussion on the aesthetics of environment; something that is perhaps sometimes lacking in contemporary analytic environmental aesthetics. He begins by considering Hegel’s famous denouncement of natural beauty and then moves on to assess the relevance of Kant’s account of natural beauty for environmental aesthetics and for environmental issues in general. Harries argues that in Kant’s notion we get a glimpse of the kind of change of heart he sees required in developing a sustainable relationship to our environment.

In “The Shape of the World: What if Aesthetic Properties Were Real?” Crispin Sartwell presents a picture of the universe as a skein made up of interrelated knots, and from this basis he develops a realist account of aesthetic properties. Sartwell’s approach emphasizes the materialist side of aesthetics and focuses on how form and matter cannot be divorced from each other. At the end of his paper, Sartwell sketches a view of all art as environmental art.

Alongside these papers by well-known figures of aesthetics, I am ex-

tremely happy to include three essays from younger rising postdoctoral scholars, María José Alcaraz León, Tom Sparrow, and Hanne Appelqvist. Alcaraz's paper "Morally Wrong Beauty as a Source of Value" is devoted to one of the most topical issues in environmental aesthetics, the relationship of moral and aesthetic value in the appreciation of natural environments. She argues against conceptions of aesthetic appreciation of nature, which regard the morally doubtful origins of natural landscapes as necessarily diminishing the aesthetic value of such landscapes and as making positive aesthetic judgments of such environments impossible.

In "Plasticity and Aesthetic Identity; or Why We Need a Spinozist Aesthetics" Tom Sparrow develops a conception of aesthetics, emphasizing what he calls the plasticity of the body and assessing the relevance of this view for environmental aesthetics and for theories of architecture. After outlining the historical background for the themes of his article, Sparrow examines the concept of sensation in the phenomenological tradition, particularly how it is developed by Merleau-Ponty and Levinas. While crediting these two philosophers for renewing the concept of sensation, Sparrow nevertheless argues that their views on sensation and human embodiment fail to account for the kind of plastic view of the human body that he seeks to develop. Sparrow finds more rewarding ideas to this end in the philosophy of Spinoza.

In "Form and Freedom: The Kantian Ethos of Musical Formalism," Hanne Appelqvist presents a reading of Eduard Hanslick's musical formalism, which draws attention to the Kantian undertones of Hanslick's view of music. In addition to a commitment to the autonomy of artistic beauty, Appelqvist argues that the conception of artistic freedom in Hanslick's formalism embodies a view of freedom similar to that which Kant holds in his ethics, namely freedom as self-legislation. The investigation of the Kantian dimensions of Hanslick's formalism forms an important part of the critique of emotionalist views of musical understanding that Appelqvist presents in the paper.

The special issue continues with Antony Fredriksson's paper, "Environmental Aesthetics Beyond the Dialectics of Interest and Disinterest: Deconstructing the Myth of Pristine Nature." He, too, brings an historical depth to the discussion on environmental aesthetics. His starting point is to undercut the distinction commonly made between natural, uncorrupted environments and human-designed environments, such as urban environments. Fredriksson uncovers the historical roots behind this distinction and examines how it is present in some central concepts of aesthetics.

In “Light and the Aesthetics of Perception” Carlo Volf considers the role of light in aesthetic perception and argues for the need to take the atmospheric quality of light into account in the practice of architecture, as well as the importance of finding ways of combining artificial and natural light that help improving human well-being.

Nathalie Heinich provides a detailed examination of what she calls “The Making of National Heritage.” She investigates the different values and assumptions behind decisions regarding which objects to include as parts of national heritage. One striking implication of her study, at least from the point of view of aesthetics, is the lack of significance that the aesthetic value of candidate objects has on the final decision; for example, aesthetic value being trumped by such values as rarity and ancientness.

The article section of the issue ends with Kimmo Sarje’s paper on the architect Sigurd Frosterus, whose work constitutes an important part of Scandinavian national heritage. Sarje concentrates on Frosterus’ work as an architecture critic and argues that this viewpoint provides new insight into this figure.

The issue closes with two book reviews by Stefàn Snævarr and Jesper Olsson.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank once more my fellow organizers of the “Environment, Aesthetics, and the Arts” conference, Arto Haapala, Ossi Naukkarinen, and Sanna Lehtinen. I have also benefited immensely from the work a group of reviewers have put on the submitted papers. Many thanks to them as well!

Kalle Puolakka, GUEST EDITOR