

Time, Space, and Intergenerational Environmental Aesthetics
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Abstract

As a general term, ‘environment’ implies the concepts of space and time; ‘aesthetics’, for its part, implies subjective experience. Taken together ‘environment’ and ‘aesthetics’ are also about particular (cf. universal), localized human perceptual experiences of independently existing entities on which we, as humans, nevertheless exercise influence. ‘Intergenerational’ implies duration and continuity, relates to, and involves several generations, each of which has its own set of social, cultural, and political mores. Each generation, taken in a global, human, universal sense, is further composed of different and varying social, cultural, political, and localized frameworks related, also, to place.

Our guiding questions are, given these elements, how are we to contribute, as Emily Brady puts it, to “the sharing of aesthetic experiences across generations and cultures to lead to the persistence of aesthetic meanings and values” and, also, the persistence of natural environments? How do we conceive of human experience and practice regarding environment in a more general context of climate and technological threats that carry with them claims of anthropocentrism and disempowerment? I answer these questions by appealing to the ideas of duration and continuity as related to environment and ecology, and the human experience of time as an ontological force for good.

Since our primary concern is about environment and temporality, I begin by (i) revisiting the disagreement between Henri Bergson and his critics about how to conceive of time and space, in which a. inner human experience is thought to be intertwined with external, scientific accounts such as Albert Einstein’s general theory of relativity (cf. Fay Dowker), and b. qualitative experience is distinguished from quantitative experience of time for successive creative evolution as per Bergson. I (hope to) support my claims by appeal to ancient and indigenous thought. This having been said, I then (ii) link time and space to particular (cf. universal) instances of relational perceptual-intellectual double awareness of environment. This will allow me in (iii) to anchor perceptual, aesthetic experience in the fabric of temporal, spatial, and epistemic concerns which may give rise to creativity and novelty – in its various cultural forms and practices – in our universally shared goal for the persistence of natural environments.

I conclude by attending to ongoing and impending environmental climate change due to global warming, which may well lead to decreased aesthetic value, indicating the lack of ecological, environmental, and human flourishing. Thus, in addition to appealing to relational perceptual-intellectual double awareness through experience of time and space, I emphasize the internal motivation for appreciative virtues, including anthropogenically minded practices of care, that are inclusive of diverse social, cultural, and political practices. The development of aesthetic character of person and place, as espoused by environmental virtue aesthetics, encourages an adjustment in behavior for appropriate accordance with particularities of environmental and ecological places in combination with social, cultural, and political frameworks. We may do this through an account of time that is qualitatively active (as in Bergson), rather than static and that that might help us take good decisions in the design of a future that seems unreal (cf. Susan Stebbing) to us now, but will be real enough for future generations.

Bio

Nicole A. Hall writes philosophy as an independent scholar, having written her PhD under the supervision of Emily Brady. She has held postdocs at the Institut Jean Nicod, Texas A&M University, Institut Paul Bocuse, with numerous publications in the *British Journal of Aesthetics*, the *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics*, anthologies on 18th century aesthetics, artificial intelligence, with a forthcoming paper in *Contemporary Aesthetics*. She has a particular interest in value theory (aesthetics and ethics), environmental philosophy, political philosophy, the philosophy of mind and perception and the philosophy of technology. She is currently working on developing a virtues approach to environmental aesthetics and ethics that extends to the everyday, ecological, environmental, and social justice within the context of everyday life and experience. To that end, she uses the virtues approach to analyze human, cultural, engagements with ecology, environment, non-human and other human entities. This approach is diverse and pluralistic, with particular concern for local communities, place, and tradition. This approach is also concerned to focus on mixed, urban and artistic spaces, and the impact of advanced technologies.