

## *Introduction*

The past three decades have witnessed a growing awareness of climate change and its impacts on people and the natural environment. It has become increasingly clear that addressing this issue requires technical solutions and, perhaps primarily, a new ecological or green culture. This recognition has led to the understanding that ecology encompasses not just the natural sciences but also the social sciences and humanities, including philosophy. “Sustainability” is an umbrella term for the multidimensional shift needed to counteract the climate crisis.

For instance, despite efforts, we are still far from achieving the United Nations’ sustainability goals (UN SDGs). However, the rise of sustainability-related discussion and work has fostered increasing interest in concepts such as care, respect, accountability, and ethical development within the human community. Philosophical aesthetics have addressed these issues, especially in environmental and everyday aesthetics. The significance of environmental aesthetics extends beyond addressing the sustainability agenda to providing philosophical insights into human and natural environments, their aesthetic qualities, and the interplay between these and non-aesthetic qualities. Thus, environmental and everyday aesthetics represent an inspiring interface between philosophical or applied aesthetics and the pursuit of ecological and social sustainability.

In light of the sustainability agenda, it is imperative for philosophy to do more than interpret the world—it should aim to change it. However, this does not necessitate a shift towards direct activism. Contrarily, philosophical aesthetics often remains within the bounds of theoretical thinking. This approach does not imply a disinterested contemplation of the world as merely an aesthetic phenomenon. As a branch of philosophy, aesthetics aids in understanding the world’s intricacies, tensions, and contradictions and anticipating and evaluating opportunities, challenges, and threats. The theoretical dimension of aesthetics is practically valuable, as it provides a foundation for recommendations on fostering a more sustainable future, including what should or should not be done, how, and why.

Philosophical aesthetics can achieve this aim in various ways: by applying traditional aesthetic concepts to new or overlooked experiences of nature, by showing how philosophical concepts not typically associated with environmental issues can advance the sustainability agenda, by interpreting well-known aspects of modern culture in a new “green” light or by examining specific, singular manifestations of contemporary culture; and by providing arguments for decision-making in areas seemingly distant from philosophical discussions.

The articles in this volume illustrate how philosophical aesthetics can combine its theoretical dimension with practical significance. Stephanie Schuster discusses the aesthetic experience of natural phenomena on a sublime temporal scale, arguing that such experiences can engender a sense of being “at home in the natural world.” Elena Romagnoli draws on hermeneutics to interpret landscape sustainability regarding situatedness, advocating for an immersive and participatory approach to landscapes. Zoltán Somhegyi examines the evolving meanings of ruins and ruination in the context of changing sustainability perspectives. Adrienne Gálosi explores sustainable aesthetic appreciation in gardens, where humans cultivate nature. Finally, Matti Tainio and Minna Santaoja demonstrate how aesthetic considerations influence technical practices. Tainio focuses on night-time illumination, highlighting its multispecies sustainability implications, while Santaoja advocates for reevaluating aesthetic values in peatland restoration, underscoring the importance of tolerating, or even embracing, awkwardness during sustainability transitions.

Sustainability has become increasingly prominent in contemporary aesthetics. The XV International Summer Conference, organized by the International Institute of Applied Aesthetics in June 2023, is a testament to this. Supported by the City of Lahti and in collaboration with the University of Helsinki, the Lahti University Campus Coordination Unit, the Finnish Society for Aesthetics, Päijät-Hämeen Kesäyliopisto, and Visit Lahti, the conference brought together scholars from various academic centers and philosophical traditions. This gathering demonstrated that “sustainable aesthetics” is an evolving field capable of uniting diverse voices in its discourse.

We believe this volume offers a glimpse into sustainable aesthetics that will interest those new to the field while contributing significantly to its ongoing development.

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