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# On Natural Resonance

**Abstract:** This paper explores the *aesthetic case* for landscape conservation. The main claim is that the experience of beautiful landscapes is an essential part of human flourishing; it is not just an enriching option for all of us and, certainly, not merely a subjective preference for some of us. Beautiful landscapes can make us feel at home in the world; this constitutes their great and irreplaceable value.

As a first step, I clarify the *concept of landscape* (section two), which brings me, in section three, to the *concept of “Stimmung”*. Section four shows *how “Stimmung”* (in the sense of mood) *is infused into landscape* (as atmosphere). Section five distinguishes various ways of how we experience landscape atmosphere, preparing the ground for the specifically aesthetic claim in section six: how, when we experience the atmosphere of a landscape *aesthetically*, we respond to it by resonating or feeling at home.

## 1 Introduction

Before I embark on the stony conceptual road ahead, let me get you into the right mood by presenting a passage from Peter Kurzeck’s autobiographical 2003 novel, *Als Gast* (“As a guest”). In the passage, the author recounts a walk he took with a friend in the city forest of Frankfurt, which—apart from the highway and its hum in the background—is as empty and quiet “as if the earth has long stopped speaking to us.”

Kurzeck’s written and spoken language is like music. It is “deep-acting”. It touches you immediately. This is why it can give us “knowledge by acquaintance” and make us *feel* the loss of nature.

Through the piece of forest now, along its edge. Such a scanty little forest—however one walks, one always walks along the edge. And the forest as if emptied out. Rather as if just erected, you say to yourself. No roots? Without roots, the trees? Professionally put up by professionals. Quality forest. Guaranteed to last. Life-size. And secured with care. Like real. Directly almost like real! And so quiet, as if the earth, every spot of earth, the plants, the stones and every thing, as if all the world has long stopped speaking to us. And we then also to ourselves. Already for a long time. We do not answer! So quiet, but behind the quiet a hum, a growing hum. From all sides. And coming towards us. Or as inside one’s own head. (Kurzeck 2012: 191–192, my translation)

Kurzeck's walk does not lead through a forest, but only through a piece of forest. A real forest is large and deep; you can enter deep into it. Such an inside does not exist in a piece of forest. A piece of forest is not a forest anymore.

Between the trees in the piece of forest, there is nothing left, no undergrowth, no shrubs, no flowers. Even the trees do not look like real trees anymore—they look more like fakes, highly praised in the excited language of advertising that culminates in the paradoxical cry: “Directly almost like real!”

We are unable to resonate with such trees, with such a piece of forest, with such highly artificial nature. It seems that in a world like this, we also have stopped resonating with and between ourselves. Yet, behind this dead quiet, the cars on the motorway are roaring louder and louder. The machine world seems to be the only thing that still grows as nature used to grow. The machine world threatens us. It intoxicates us.

## 2 The Concept of Landscape

To clarify the concept of landscape, we must first look at the concept of nature. As Aristotle already taught us in his *Physics*, *nature* is that part of the world which has not been made by human beings but comes into existence and vanishes by virtue of itself. Artifacts are the opposites of nature in this sense; they are made by human beings. The distinction between nature and artifacts is polar or gradual (like the distinction between light and dark) and not binary or dichotomous (like the distinction between being pregnant and not pregnant); one cannot be a little bit pregnant, but it can be more or less light or dark. There is hardly any untouched nature on earth anymore. Most of what we call nature, the conservation of which we are concerned with, lies, in fact, between the extremes of pure nature and pure artifact. It is a mix of the natural and the artificial in which the natural aspect prevails.

In nature, we can distinguish natural organisms and things (like plants and rocks) from larger natural units (like landscapes). Although most *landscapes* today are cultivated and not wild, they are not necessarily less beautiful; consider, for example, the garden-like English landscape.

There is no sharp boundary between landscapes and gardens (or parks), as again England's landscape gardens show. *Gardens* are, first, laid out for aesthetic enjoyment and in this respect they fall somewhere between art and nature; second, they usually surround a house and are themselves surrounded by a fence, so that they mediate between the house and the landscape.

Landscapes are especially pertinent to the experience of natural resonance. This is because they are relatively free from human ends. Yet one can certainly

also resonate with nature in gardens and parks, as well as with singular organisms and natural things. But let us focus here on landscapes.

To understand landscapes as larger natural units is only one of many ways of understanding them. This modest, everyday understanding (2.1), which I opt for here, must be distinguished from two more demanding aesthetic ones (2.2 and 2.3). The reason why I prefer the first understanding will emerge in the next section (3).

## 2.1 Larger Natural Unit

In twelfth-century Old High German, “lantscaf” denoted a larger natural area and its population. In fifteenth-century Netherlands, the term could also refer to a painting of a larger natural unit. Art historians still talk of landscapes in these terms. Today, the boundaries of landscapes are no longer political, as they were in the beginning, and as the German synonym “Gebiet” (from “gebiete[n]” = to rule) makes explicit. As I suggest in the next section on “Stimmung”, for us it is atmosphere that constitutes the *unity* of landscapes.

## 2.2 Larger Natural Unit in Aesthetic Contemplation

According to this aesthetic understanding, you encounter landscapes only when you attend to what is around you *for its own sake*. You do not experience landscapes when all you are looking for is recreation or research.

## 2.3 Larger Natural Unit in Autonomous Aesthetic Contemplation

This even more demanding aesthetic understanding is closely associated with Joachim Ritter’s well-known article on landscape aesthetics (cf. Ritter 1974, see also Simmel 2007). For Ritter, the phenomenon of landscape begins with Petrarch’s ascent of Mont Ventoux in 1336, since in this excursion, and its literary reflection, Petrarch attended to nature *as such* and not only to nature as the book of God. Most contemporary landscape theorists, at least in Germany, follow Ritter (e.g. Seel 1991: 221).

## 3 The Concept of “Stimmung”

This section presents “Stimmung”, or atmosphere, as the unifying principle of landscapes, taking up a proposal that Georg Simmel made in his classic piece on the philosophy of landscape a hundred years ago.

The German word “Stimmung” is untranslatable (arguably more untranslatable than “Heimat” where being at home at least comes close). “Stimmung” embraces three phenomena while its English and French counterparts (“mood”, “attunement”, “ambiance”, “humeur” or “atmosphère”) usually embrace only one or two. The three phenomena are harmony, mood, and atmosphere (cf. Wellbery 2003).

### 3.1 Harmony

Being in tune or in harmony is the original sixteenth century meaning of “Stimmung”. Musical instruments were said to be in tune or integrated and ready to be played, and later, in the eighteenth century, the same was said about the faculties of the human soul. Immanuel Kant, in his *Critique of Judgement*, famously talks about the harmony (“proportionierte Stimmung”) of the faculties of imagination and understanding (“Einbildungskraft und Verstand”) in aesthetic contemplation.

### 3.2 Mood

Moods belong to the sphere of mental human feeling; they are not just *bodily* feelings such as toothache, nausea or fatigue. In contrast to standard *emotions* (rage, sorrow or joy), which are directed at something or other in particular, moods (sadness or cheerfulness) have no specific objects, but are rather about life and the world at large. Moods integrate us. The musical metaphor of “Stimmung” as introduced in the last paragraph highlights the holistic character of moods. Moods synthesize what we feel into a more or less harmonious whole. They ensure that we hang together affectively and don’t fall to pieces. Nevertheless, there are times when we do fall to pieces, and in this sense, we are not always in a mood.

There are two major kinds of moods: transitory (as in “moody”) and enduring. Unlike the connotation of “mood” in English, which privileges the first kind, “Stimmung” is wider and refers equally to the second kind. The so-called “be-

ständige Lebensstimmungen” are longer lasting and more reliable or world-disclosing than the short-term and capricious “Launen” (see Bollnow 1995; Goldie 2000: chapter seven; and Ratcliffe 2008).

Moods can be *shared* among human beings. Such inter-human or collective affects, be they the result of infection as in mass panic, or of true—that is, sympathetic or dialogical—sharing, are also called collective “atmospheres”. In addition to such inter-human atmospheres, there are also nonhuman atmospheres (which in turn can be shared by us via infection or sympathy, as will be explored later in section 5).

### 3.3 Atmosphere

When nonhuman entities such as landscapes, cities, buildings or rooms are said to have an aura or an atmosphere, they are regarded not only as integrated wholes (as in 3.1) but also as full of feeling, e.g. full of peace or melancholy (as in 3.2). The atmospheres of landscapes change with the weather, the time of day and the season. These transitory atmospheres can be distinguished from the more enduring atmosphere, *gestalt* or *character* of landscapes. The character of landscapes depends on their physiognomy, climate and history. Both the enduring and the transitory atmospheres of landscapes are not merely subjective phenomena, even if subjective factors like personal memories and personal moods also play a role in actual landscape experience.

Landscape character is the *principle of unity* behind the first, modest concept of landscape in section 2. As not all experiences of atmospheric larger natural units are aesthetic rather than hedonistic or scientific, the two more demanding, aesthetic concepts of landscape in section 2 do indeed seem too narrow.

Where a large natural area loses its character through a natural catastrophe or human destruction, it lacks the unity necessary for being a landscape. It turns into an expressionless *heterogeneity*, into a non-place or landscape garbage. It does not turn into an ugly “landscape”. Ugly landscapes are the opposites of aesthetically attractive and, in this broad sense, beautiful landscapes.

Not every landscape change amounts to landscape destruction though. The change can also be for the good. The Golden Gate Bridge, which spans the Golden Gate Strait between San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean, might be an example of the latter. Still, much of what goes on around us does amount to landscape destruction.<sup>1</sup>

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1 For a scientific study that documents landscape destruction look at Ewald/Klaus 2009. For an

## 4 How Is “Stimmung” Infused into Landscape?

Unlike human beings and many (other) animals, landscapes cannot feel anything in the literal sense. They do not have nervous systems. Nevertheless, we attribute moods such as peacefulness and melancholy to landscapes. (To a lesser degree, we also attribute bodily feelings, emotions, thoughts, and actions to landscapes.) The same holds for architectural units, for rooms, buildings, streets, neighborhoods and cities. It seems to hold also for artworks. Paintings, symphonies, poems and theatre plays all have their moods. They *express* moods (among other things) and do not merely, if they are both representational and expressive, *represent* them. Artworks and buildings—like landscapes—cannot feel anything in the literal sense. Why then do we attribute moods to them? On what basis? With what right? To repeat the question in Georg Simmel’s terms: “to what extent can the mood of a landscape be located within it, objectively, given that it is a mental state, and can thus reside alone in the emotional reflexes of the beholder and not in the unconscious external objects?” (Simmel 2007: 26–27)

There are many philosophical responses to this question, including that the question is misconceived. It is advisable to start with this last response before looking at four major explanations of how landscapes “acquire” moods: the projective, the causal, the associative, and the metaphorical models.

Phenomenologists such as Martin Heidegger, Otto Friedrich Bollnow, Hermann Schmitz, and Gernot Böhme maintain that asking how “Stimmung” is infused into landscape is the wrong question to ask. “Stimmung” is already out there. When we move in landscapes we enter their “Stimmungen”; the phenomenon of “Stimmung” lies before the divide between subject and world. Here is a quote from Otto Friedrich Bollnow’s classic *Das Wesen der Stimmungen* from 1941:

In “Stimmung”, the world has not yet become an object, as it does afterwards in the later forms of consciousness, especially in knowing; rather, “Stimmungen” still live entirely in the unseparated unity of self and world, with a shared colouring of “Stimmung” pervading both. That is why it is also wrong to assign “Stimmung” solely to the subjective side and to assume that it then, in a sense, rubs off on the world. (Bollnow 1995: 39, my translation)

This might seem a tempting explanation, but can it really apply to *adult* human beings who experience “Stimmungen”? Can adults not *differentiate* between

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artistic exemplification, look at Müller’s set of pictures 1973, or listen to the passages 5 and 8 on the second cd of Peter Kurzeck’s audio book 2007.

themselves and the world when they feel, for example, sad in a cheerful crowd, an amusing theatre play, a homely street, or a bright landscape? It seems they can and do.

To be sure, when sad they might find it difficult to be open to, to realize, to attend to, or even to share to some extent the incongruous positive atmosphere around them. As with moods, strong emotions also have this tendency to spill over, to rub off on their surroundings. Their lack of exact fit is a price we have to pay for their immediacy. Throughout our lives, we work on improving this fit through “sentimental education”. Despite this somewhat irrational tendency in our moods and emotions, we can and do distinguish between them and the state of our surroundings.

It therefore seems that Otto Friedrich Bollnow has too primitive an idea of “Stimmungen”. What he says about the undivided unity between self and world may hold for babies and for some animals, but it does not seem apposite for adults. Human beings might indeed begin their lives with what Sigmund Freud called the oceanic feeling of being one with the universe, and what Max Scheler and Maurice Merleau-Ponty referred to as identification or pre-communication. However, this primary unity must be distinguished from the differentiated unity that later develops upon its basis and that characterizes adult moods. While babies might just *find* themselves at home in or at one with the world, adults must open up to the atmosphere around them and *make* themselves at home. For adults, the issue of how moods permeate landscapes, buildings or artworks and how we respond to them remains a question.

The transition from primary unity to adult self-world differentiation is gradual. As the psychiatrist Ulrich Gebhard reports in his 1994 study *Kind und Natur* (cf. Gebhard 1994), small children perceive both the natural and the artificial world around them according to themselves and their current states. At ages 6 to 7, a child still believes everything to have consciousness. At around the age of 8, this is limited to moving things; at around 11 it applies only to moving things; and finally at age 12 only to animals.

Gebhard, in fact, believes that *child-like animism* never fully leaves us. According to him, adults still “feed off” of these past experiences of unity, and borders that are too rigid are damaging. When we reach old age, we often become like children again. As he sees it, our enlightened scientific worldview manages to conceal the magical with only a flimsy layer.

As against Gebhard, I fear that we cannot have it both ways. We cannot both be scientifically literate and realize that landscapes are non-sentient, and yet believe that they are somehow sentient nevertheless. I thus conclude that we have to confront the question of how “Stimmung” is infused into landscape. Let us now turn to four major answers to this question.

## 4.1 Projective Model

This model harks back to our childhood, too. It differs from the preceding one in that first, it fully acknowledges the legitimacy of the question and, second, employs another psychological mechanism to account for moods in landscapes: projection instead of complete or partial unity.

Richard Wollheim has worked out the projective model in some detail (cf. Wollheim 1993). For him, the mechanism of projection lies at the heart of the phenomenon of expression both in art and landscape. While we find expression in landscapes, in art it is created by the artists.

As Wollheim explains, projection is an internal act that we carry out under instinctual guidance, when we are either in a mental state that we value (like love or curiosity) and that we see as under threat, or in a state that we dread (like cruelty or melancholy) and by which we find ourselves threatened. Anxiety alerts us to this situation and projection alters it, bringing us some relief from this anxiety. At the beginning of life, projection occurs in a totally haphazard fashion. Only later does it become more orderly and the parts of the environment upon which features are projected are selected because of their affinity to these feelings. In consequence, these parts of the environment are experienced as of a piece with these feelings.

Wollheim understands landscape atmospheres as *complex projective properties*. We identify them through experiences that we have; in this regard they are like secondary properties, such as colors, which would not exist if no one was there to see them. But projective properties differ from such secondary properties in being not only perceptual but also *affective*, with the affection directed not merely towards what is in front of one but also towards some older and more dominant object. The experience intimates or reveals a *history*, sometimes its own, usually only the kind of projective history of how it might have arisen.

*Simple* projection projects an unwelcome psychological property onto another figure with psychology, thereby changing primarily the beliefs about this figure, whereas *complex* projection projects an unwelcome psychological property onto an environment without psychology, thereby changing primarily our attitude and not our beliefs. Furthermore, the property itself is changed; the peaceful character of the landscape is experienced not as a state of mind that inheres in the landscape irrespective of ourselves, but as continuous with our own peacefulness, *as of a piece with it*.

This is an ingenious proposal. Yet again it seems to be too much driven by childhood needs, and negative ones for that matter, being too concerned with child-like anxiety and its relief to do justice to the differentiated quality of adult moods and their experience of landscape atmospheres.



## 4.2 Causal Model

According to this much more straightforward model, a peaceful landscape only makes *us* feel peaceful. The landscape is not really peaceful itself. To call it peaceful is a loose manner of speaking, attributing back to it the feeling it has triggered in us.

That landscapes have causal effects on us is beyond doubt. Johann Wolfgang Goethe, in his theory of colors for example, explored the psychological effects of colors, such as the soothing impact of the color green. Today, such causal effects are systematically used in light therapy against winter depression.

## 4.3 Associative Model

This is another uncomplicated and popular model. It explains the peacefulness of a landscape by its power to make us think of something peaceful, because we connect it with something or it resembles something (like the face of a Saint Bernhard dog resembles a sad human face). But, again, the landscape is not really peaceful itself.

The problem with both models, the causal as well as the associative, is that they fail to capture that the peaceful feeling is intimately related to the landscape. How the landscape looks, sounds or smells is integral to a full description of the feeling. Contrast this with a bottle of wine that makes you cheerful and reminds you of the good old days. To describe your cheerfulness, you do not need to talk about how the wine tastes. The peacefulness is *in* the landscape, whereas the cheerfulness is not in the wine. Causal effects and associations are too external to account for the “within-ness” or integrality of moods in landscapes.

## 4.4 Metaphorical Model

According to this last model, landscapes can indeed be peaceful in themselves, but not in the literal sense. In recent aesthetics, Nelson Goodman, Jerrold Levinson and Roger Scruton explicated this model for the arts. In music, for example, Roger Scruton distinguishes three levels: the primary and physical level of *vibrations in the air*; the secondary and phenomenal level of heard *sounds*, “audibilia” that the deaf person cannot hear; and the tertiary and musical level of *tones* heard in the sounds. To hear tones in music moving up and down, attracting and repelling each other, striving forward and lingering, crying out and comfort-

ing is to hear sounds through the metaphor of human life, of human movement in space, of human action and feeling. A metaphor is the deliberative application of a term or phrase to something that is known *not* to exemplify it, e.g. when Monday is called a blue day. By fusing dissimilar things, the thing's aspect is changed, so that one responds to it in a different way. Hearing music, experiencing its moods, is metaphorical hearing. It is hearing with *double intentionality*, hearing *both* sounds and tones by hearing tones *in* sounds (cf. Scruton 1997).

Following on from this understanding, landscape atmospheres can be understood as *tertiary aspects* like moods in music. Landscape atmospheres are as real as their colors and sounds on the secondary level, which in turn are as real as the light waves and the air vibrations on the primary level. As Roger Scruton puts it:

Because we are subjects the world looks back at us with a questioning regard, and we respond by organizing and conceptualizing it in other ways than those endorsed by science. The world as we live it is not the world as science explains it, any more than the smile of the Mona Lisa is a smear of pigments on a canvas. But this lived world is as real as the Mona Lisa's smile. (Scruton 2012: 128–129)

Babies and some animals neither experience atmospheres in this sense, nor do they see landscapes. They can only be said to feel atmospheres in the much simpler sense of primary (more or less porous) unity. Metaphorical experience, seeing *x* in terms of *y*, which it is not literally but which fits and reveals something about it, is a high achievement; it requires close attention and imagination. Poets are particularly skilled at this. They find “a magic word” and make “the world sing”—as Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff famously puts it.

The metaphorical model bears some similarity to the projective model. Metaphors are also “projective”, but in a much more general sense than the anxiety-driven psychoanalytic one employed in the projective model.

## 5 Some Basic Types of Experience

In order to prepare the ground for the specifically aesthetic type of landscape experience, four more basic types should be distinguished: perception (or understanding), empathy (or vicarious/reproduced feeling), sympathy (or fellow feeling) and infection. The contemporary debate on empathy, in which “empathy” can mean any of these different phenomena, still needs to regain the conceptual standard that phenomenology reached at the beginning of the last century, most notably in the writings of Max Scheler and Edith Stein (see Scheler 1954; and Stein 1989; for a summary and elaboration of Scheler's position, cf. Krebs 2011).

## 5.1 Perception

When we perceive that a landscape is peaceful, we remain affectively more or less neutral. We simply realize that it is peaceful (in the metaphorical sense). It does not require much attention or imagination to recognize the atmospheres of landscapes, as poetry and other creative arts have paved the way for us. We do not need to be aesthetically active ourselves to respond to landscapes, as Joachim Ritter and before him Georg Simmel seem to have thought (cf. 2.3).

## 5.2 Empathy

When we empathize with a peaceful landscape, we move with its atmosphere, enacting it but not sharing it. As the example of cruelty makes it clear, empathy occupies an intermediate position between perception and sympathy. Cruel people are not sympathetic to the suffering of their victims, but they still need empathy in order to fully enjoy their victims' pain.

## 5.3 Sympathy

When we sympathize with a peaceful landscape, we move with its atmosphere and share it. We resonate emotionally, as we do when we listen to a favorite piece of music. Sympathy is an emotion in the full sense, including bodily feeling, cognitive evaluation and behavior, while empathy is “only” a vivid mode of cognitive understanding; although in certain cases empathy can lead to actual emotions, it does not necessarily do so. Sympathy comes in two variants: participatory sympathy and meta-sympathy. Only the first is relevant for landscapes. In the second, we are sad *about* the sadness or bad situation of another, but we do not accompany her through her sadness as in the first variant.

## 5.4 Infection

When we are infected by a peaceful landscape, we are swayed by its atmosphere.

Infection is causal while perception, empathy and sympathy are intentional; they are directed towards the expressive quality of the landscape. In being directed towards an “other”, they presuppose some distance between self and other.

Infection is not alert to this distance. Infection is relevant for mental health and wellness, but in itself it is not an aesthetic phenomenon.<sup>2</sup>

## 6 Aesthetic Resonance

This final section spells out how resonating aesthetically with landscape atmospheres can make us feel at home in the world. It distinguishes between stronger and weaker understandings. While beauty, especially functional beauty, allows for feeling perfectly at home, sublimity affords only a partial or ambivalent version.

Aesthetic landscape experience involves not only attending to landscapes closely, perceiving their atmosphere (5.1) and empathizing with it (5.2), but also entering it and sharing it (5.3) for its own sake. In stressing the “intrinsicness” of aesthetic experience, as well as the distance that is constituent of sympathy (as it is directed towards an “other”), this understanding is reminiscent of Kant’s aesthetics, even if his aesthetics is much colder than that. As John Dewey, among many others, observes, sympathetic emotions play no role in it: “To define the emotional element of esthetic perception merely as the pleasure taken in the act of contemplation, independent of what is excited by the matter contemplated, results, however, in a thoroughly anemic conception of art.” (Dewey 2005: 264) Instead of aesthetic contemplation, I therefore prefer to speak of aesthetic “resonance”. (I will elaborate on the physical metaphor of resonance below.)

Still, in tandem with Kant, it is important to distinguish between aesthetic experience on the one hand, and physiological and psychological (for example, hedonistic) impact or effect, on the other. This fundamental point is also stressed by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his 1938 *Lectures on Aesthetics*. Wittgenstein argues that aesthetic reactions—like the discomfort one might feel when a door is too low or a musical passage is incoherent, and the appreciation one might feel when a suit is the right length or a poetic image is precise—are “directed”; there is a “why” to aesthetic reactions, not a “cause” to them. Aesthetics is not “a branch of psychology” (LA 1966: 14, 17).

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<sup>2</sup> Many nature activities combine health and wellness with aesthetics. Think of hiking in the mountains or swimming in the sea. In such combined nature activities, nature is not replaceable by a gym. This irreplaceability adds force to the aesthetic argument for nature conservation. Still, the (replaceable) health and wellness effects of nature are of immense importance too. “Feeling at home” in nature is often due to these effects. Nevertheless, it is not this kind of feeling at home in nature that is explored here.

The main thesis of my paper about how aesthetically attractive landscapes can make us feel at home in the world does not concern *causal impact* or *effect*. Rather, it concerns the quality of the aesthetic experience itself, which can include, as a by-product, the mood of feeling at home.

Like all intrinsic activities, aesthetic sympathetic attention or resonance is accompanied by pleasure. Georg Henrik von Wright calls this kind of pleasure “*active pleasure*” and contrasts it with, first, “*passive pleasure*” such as the good taste of an apple, and, second, the “*pleasure of satisfaction*”, that is, the feeling we have when we get what we want (cf. Wright 1993: 63–65). It is an intricate philosophical problem as to whether active pleasure (as an overall feeling, which might also involve some struggle and suffering, such as in the process of artistic creation), is a conceptually necessary and defining element of all that is done for its own sake or whether it is only typical of it. What is clear, however, is that we cannot intentionally induce active pleasure. It arises only when we are absorbed in the activity and forget about our daily worries. It is a *by-product* of the activity. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has popularized the notion of the self-forgetful drive, which characterizes active pleasure as *flow*.

Csikszentmihalyi presents empirical findings to show how, in some particularly successful cases of actively pleasant intrinsic activities, the subjects become aware of themselves as part of a larger whole. As he sees it, there is nothing esoteric or metaphysical in this: “When a person invests all her psychic energy into an interaction—whether it is with another person, a boat, a mountain, or a piece of music—she in effect becomes part of a system of action greater than what the individual self had been before.” (Csikszentmihalyi 1990: 65)

Because of its holistic direction, this feeling of differentiated unity or being at home can be regarded as a *mood*. In contrast, mere active pleasure or flow seems to be “only” a non-intentional bodily feeling.

To sum up, the affective quality of aesthetic experience highlighted so far lies in sympathy and in flow on the one hand plus, in some cases, the feeling of being at home on the other. The *physical metaphor of resonance* underlines this affective quality.

However, the metaphor of resonance might be misleading in at least three ways. First, physical resonance occurs when one object vibrates with another at the same or a similar natural frequency, e.g. when the G- and D-strings of a violin vibrate with a G-major chord on a piano. This is a *causal* phenomenon, whereas aesthetic resonance is first and foremost intentional sympathy.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The metaphor of resonance therefore also fits non-aesthetic human phenomena such as being infected by laughter or crying, which could be called “*causal resonances*”. Other types of reso-

Second, physical resonance is not only causal but also *instantaneous*; aesthetic resonance, in contrast, requires a “gymnastics of attention” (to borrow a phrase from Roger Scruton). It takes time and effort; only sometimes, in learnt spontaneity, does it occur instantaneously. We can distinguish the immediate seizure by an aesthetic atmosphere from the discrimination that sets in afterwards, which may or may not validate the first immediate impression. This first impression is directed and is not to be confused with infection.

Third, physical resonance tends to be *bilateral* (and even amplifying: think of the famous example of marching soldiers collapsing a bridge). Not only does the violin resonate with the piano, the piano resonates back with the violin. This has led Hartmut Rosa to conceptualize resonance in general, including aesthetic resonance, as a mutual phenomenon. For him, resonance is not an echo relation, but a response relation; it requires that both parties speak with their own voices. In aesthetic resonance, as he has it, not only do we respond to the world, the world also responds to us (cf. Rosa 2016: 298). This mutual concept of aesthetic resonance, however, slips into metaphysics, as nature does not respond to us in any literal sense. To distinguish Rosa’s concept from mine, his would better be called “*rosanence*”. What Rosa might have in mind is the Eichendorffian phenomenon of the magic word, which sounds the song that sleeps in all things. Soberly understood, this phenomenon is nothing but our feeling that our metaphors *fit* the world. We create our metaphors but we cannot create the fit. The fit must happen by itself. If it does, it feels as if the world responds to us and begins to sing.

## 6.1 Beauty

Landscapes are *beautiful*, in the broad sense, when they invite and reward intrinsic sympathetic attention or resonance. Their appeal, similar to the appeal of everything that is beautiful, is not limited to some of us, but open to all. Aesthetic landscape resonance is not just a subjective preference, as travel guides and art criticism prove. It is a universally accessible form that the desire for beauty can take. The desire for beauty is an anthropological constant. Fulfilling this desire in one way or another is an important part of the good human life. As mor-

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nance are “*biographical resonance*” (when you feel at home in your neighborhood) and “*social resonance*” (when you are in harmony with certain people, sharing activities, emotions and moods with them). In his book *Resonanz* (2016), Hartmut Rosa investigates all these types. See also his earlier book *Social Acceleration* (2013), which views social acceleration as a “resonance killer”.

ality requires respect for the essentials of the good life of all human beings, conserving beauty is a moral obligation.

How beautiful landscapes and other beautiful objects or ensembles manage to lure and satisfy us is, of course, the central question of aesthetics. Classical answers stress symmetry, harmony or unity in diversity. Modern answers focus on the experiencing subject. According to the Kantian answer, beautiful objects or ensembles bring our faculties of understanding and imagination into free play. This intellectual Kantian model should at least be complemented by the idea of a “free play of sympathy”. It is not only our cognitive faculties that are attracted and challenged by beauty but also our affective powers. Beauty does not only make us think about many things, it also makes us feel many things. It makes us open up and grow both rationally and emotionally.

Do the *atmospheric* and the beautiful then amount to the same thing (at least for beautiful landscapes and expressive art)? Not necessarily. Something might have a strong positive or negative atmosphere in the sense of an overwhelming impact, infecting us but not inviting us to attend to and sympathize with it for its own sake. Kitsch could be an example of this. We might formulate this point differently: what is merely atmospheric *has* an atmosphere, while what is beautiful *expresses* an atmosphere. If we put the point like this we would, however, be employing a weak notion of expression that would allow us to say that beautiful landscapes express atmospheres. We could not limit the notion of expression to artworks that admittedly are expressive in a different and deeper sense than landscapes. Expressive art is a kind of communication. It has a message. It pursues meaning. It articulates, explores and meditates on human concepts in a structure all of its own. Expressiveness in art is an achievement. This does not hold for landscapes. Compared with art, the expressiveness of landscapes is a superficial phenomenon.

Still, landscape beauty is special and *cannot be replaced* by other kinds of beauty. If it were replaceable, nothing much would follow from the aesthetic argument in terms of landscape conservation. One reason why landscape beauty is special is that we experience landscapes synaesthetically and feel them with *all our senses*, not only with our eyes and ears, which are more capable of aesthetic distance than our noses, tongues and fingers are. We even move around in landscapes. Sensual feeling and, yes, infection is part and parcel of aesthetic landscape experience. We can thus add infection to the affective aspects of aesthetic landscape experience outlined so far, which include sympathy, flow and feeling at home. Infection serves to increase the immersive effect of beautiful landscapes, so that we may feel at home *in* them, both sensually and aesthetically.

Yet, beautiful landscapes are irreplaceable first and foremost because they fulfill our conscious or unconscious longing to be part of, and not alienated from, the

natural world, the world that is just there, that comes into being and vanishes by virtue of itself. Beautiful landscapes heal the rift between subject and nature, both the nature out there and the nature in us. Living in harmony with nature in this sense is more than an enriching option for a good life; it is an essential part of human flourishing. Here is Otto Friedrich Bollnow once more:

It is disastrous when humans live in the stony deserts of cities, in rooms that more often than not are fully air-conditioned, and are scarcely affected anymore by the changing seasons. For this reason, it is extremely important that humans experience the rhythms of nature as well as the rhythms that order their own lives, that they feel the pauses and slow down for them, and then respond to the reawakening of life in the spring with all their energy, experiencing it as a radical renewal. But this can only occur in the intense experience of the sprouting green of nature. As Hölderlin writes in his lovely verses, the “holy green” “refreshes” us and transforms us into youths again. (Bollnow 1988: 55, my translation)

Beautiful landscapes teach us how to “ *dwell on earth*”, Bollnow continues, following Martin Heidegger (cf. Heidegger 2013). They give us a sense of place and make us honor it.

## 6.2 Sublimity

There are stronger and weaker forms of feeling at home in nature. So far I have mainly talked about the strongest one, *perfect sympathetic coordination*, which feels like unity.

Often, however, we succeed only *partially* in our attempt at sympathetically moving with something. Our failure need not be due to ourselves; it could also be due to the landscape. The classical distinction between the beautiful and the sublime is relevant here. For our purposes, it can be reconstructed as follows: Only the beautiful (now in a more limited sense than before and no longer synonymous with “aesthetically attractive”) allows us to be fully taken up in it. The sublime, in its infinite extent and power, entices us to sympathetically move with it, too. The subject enjoys participating in its magnitude and strength. However, the subject also feels painfully reminded of her own insignificance and vulnerability. The sublime confronts us with a tension between a celebration of the landscape and self-negation. Still, insofar as the sublime appeals to us and invites us to partially move with it, neither leaving us cold nor threatening us ex-



itionally, it is possible to talk about feeling at home, in a weaker sense, in sublime nature too (cf. Cochrane 2012).<sup>4</sup>

### 6.3 Functional Beauty

A third understanding of feeling at home in nature opens up when we attend to the landscape that surrounds us not as such, but in relation to ourselves, that is, in its functionality for our own good. In Kantian terminology, the latter kind of experience is directed at the “dependent” beauty of the landscape and not at its “pure” beauty. A landscape that looks as if it affords a good human life is beautiful in the functional sense. It is ugly if it doesn’t. Thus, contrary to “positive aesthetics”, there is a sense in which nature can be *ugly* (for positive aesthetics see Carlson 2000; and Budd 2002).

In functionally beautiful landscapes we feel at home, not only because they have a pleasant physiological and psychological impact on us, but also because they indicate, by the way they look, sound and smell, that they can support human life and provide for its needs. *Evolutionary aesthetics*, which traces our sense for beauty back to our sense for landscapes with a high survival value for our species, like the savannah, finds a limited justification here (see Dutton 2009).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> As the example of the Alps famously shows, only *existential* threat and sublimity exclude each other.

<sup>5</sup> For an indication of how the aesthetic case for natural conservation is embedded in the large and diverse field of major environmentalist arguments, cf. Krebs 1999; a shorter, German version is: Krebs 1997.

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