

CONTEMPORARY ENVIRONMENTAL AESTHETICS AND THE REQUIREMENTS OF ENVIRONMENTALISM

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ABSTRACT:

Since the aesthetic experience of nature has been and continues to be vitally important for conservation and preservation of the natural environment, this essay addresses the relationship between contemporary environmental aesthetics and environmentalism. The essay first examines two traditional positions concerning aesthetic appreciation of nature, the picturesque landscape approach and the formalist theory of art. Some environmentalists have found fault with the modes of aesthetic appreciation of nature that are associated with these two views, charging that they are anthropocentric, scenery-obsessed, superficial, subjective, and morally vacuous. On the basis of these failings of traditional aesthetic approaches to nature, five requirements of environmentalism are pinpointed: that the aesthetics of nature should be acentric, environment-focused, serious, objective, and morally engaged. The essay then examines two contemporary positions in environmental aesthetics, the aesthetics of engagement and scientific cognitivism, assessing each in respect to the five requirements of environmentalism.

OUTLINE:

1. Traditional Aesthetics of Nature
 - a. The picturesque landscape tradition
 - b. The formalist theory of art
2. The Problem
 - a. The failings of traditional aesthetics of nature
 - b. The requirements of environmentalism
3. Contemporary Environmental Aesthetics
 - a. Non-cognitive approaches
 - b. Cognitive approaches
4. Conclusion

ESSAY:

The relationship between aesthetic appreciation of nature and environmental preservation and conservation has a long and interesting history. As demonstrated by environmental philosopher Eugene Hargrove in his historical study of the development of American environmental beliefs and attitudes, over the past three centuries the aesthetic dimensions of natural environments have been increasingly brought to public attention by both the arts and the sciences.¹ Consequently, accord-

¹ Eugene C. Hargrove, "The Historical Foundations of American Environmental Attitudes," *Environmental Ethics* 1 (1979): 209-240; reprinted in A. Carlson and S. Lintott, eds., *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism: From Beauty to Duty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

ing to Hargrove, aesthetic appreciation has been influential in a number of landmark decisions concerning the preservation of some of North America's most magnificent environments. Other environmental philosophers agree with Hargrove's assessment. For example, J. Baird Callicott claims that:

What kinds of country we consider to be exceptionally beautiful makes a huge difference when we come to decide which places to save, which to restore or enhance, and which to allocate to other uses. Therefore, a sound natural aesthetics is crucial to sound conservation policy and land management.²

The importance of a sound conception of the aesthetic value of nature to environmentalism is echoed by other environmental thinkers. Ned Hettinger sums up his recent study of the significance of environmental aesthetics for environmentalism by affirming that "environmental ethics would benefit from taking environmental aesthetics more seriously."³

1. Traditional Aesthetics of Nature

To fully understand the relationship between the aesthetic appreciation of nature and environmental conservation and preservation and in particular the relationship between contemporary environmental aesthetics and environmentalism, it is useful to look briefly at the historical development of the aesthetics of nature. Two movements in this historical development are especially significant concerning the relationship between traditional aesthetics of nature and environmentalism: first, the picturesque landscape tradition and, second, the formalist theory of art. After a brief overview of the general historical background, I will consider each of these two developments in turn.

In the West, both aesthetic appreciation of nature and its philosophical investigation flowered in the early modern period, especially in the eighteenth century. During that century, the founders of modern Western aesthetics, influenced by new developments in science and increasingly empiricist in orientation, began to take nature as an ideal object of aesthetic experience and developed the notion of disinterestedness as the mark of such experience. According to one standard account, in the course of the century, this notion, which has continued into the present time as a criterion of the aesthetic, was elaborated such as to exclude from aesthetic appreciation an ever-increasing range of associations and conceptualizations.⁴ The concept of disinterestedness reached its full theoretical development at the end of the century by which time properly disinter-

² J. Baird Callicott, "Leopold's Land Aesthetic," in Carlson and Lintott, *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism*, p. 106.

³ Ned Hettinger, "Allen Carlson's Environmental Aesthetics and the Protection of the Environment," *Environmental Ethics* 27 (2005), p. 76.

⁴ See Jerome Stolnitz, "Of the Origins of 'Aesthetic Disinterestedness,'" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 20 (1961): 131-143.

ested aesthetic experience was taken to exclude not only the personal and the economic, but also the moral and even the cognitive. The concept was given classic articulation by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Judgment*, in which he also elaborated the “superiority which natural beauty has over that of art.”⁵

Once nature was recognized as an ideal object of aesthetic experience, the concept of disinterestedness provided the basis for the separation of the aesthetic experience of nature into three distinct modes. First, there was the traditional idea of the beautiful, which easily applied to tamed and cultivated European landscapes and gardens. Second, there was the concept of the sublime. In the experience of the sublime, the more threatening of nature’s manifestations, such as mountains and wilderness, were viewed with disinterest and thus could be aesthetically appreciated, rather than simply feared and despised. However, for the appreciation of nature, even more important than either the beautiful or the sublime was the third idea for which disinterestedness cleared the ground: that of the picturesque. Historian of the picturesque John Conron summarizes the differences as follows: Beautiful forms tend to be small and smooth, but subtly varied, delicate, and “fair” in color, while sublime forms, by contrast, are powerful, vast, intense, terrifying, and “definitionless.” The picturesque is typically in the middle ground between the sublime and the beautiful, being “complex and eccentric, varied and irregular, rich and forceful, vibrant with energy.”⁶

1a. Traditional Aesthetics of Nature: The picturesque landscape tradition

As Conron notes, the idea of the picturesque stands between those of the beautiful and the sublime, and thus it is not surprising that of the three notions, the picturesque achieved the greatest prominence. It captures the great middle ground of, in Conron’s words, the “complex and eccentric, varied and irregular, rich and forceful, vibrant with energy,” all of which seem well-suited to nature. Moreover, the idea of the picturesque also had roots in the theories of some earlier eighteenth century aestheticians, who thought that what they called the “works of nature” were, although proper and important objects of aesthetic experience, more appealing when they resembled works of art. Indeed, the term “picturesque” literally means “picture-like” and thus the idea of the picturesque gave rise to a mode of aesthetic appreciation in which nature is experienced as if divided into a set of scenes--into blocks of scenery. Such scenes aimed in subject matter and composition at ideals dictated by the arts, especially landscape painting. Initially these ideals were found in the works of seventeenth century artists such as Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa; later they were given classic expression by painters such as Paul Sandby. Thus, while disinterestedness stripped and objectified nature, the picturesque dressed it up again--now in a new set of subjective,

⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* [1790], §42.

⁶ John Conron, *American Picturesque* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), pp. 17-18.

artistic images: a river valley with an arched bridge or a rugged cliff with a ruined castle.⁷

Picturesque appreciation of nature culminated in the late eighteenth century when it was popularized in the writings of William Gilpin, Uvedale Price, and Richard Payne Knight, such as Gilpin's famous, *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty, On Picturesque Travel, and On Sketching Landscape*, Price's, *An Essay on the Picturesque*, and Knight's elaborate poem, *The Landscape*.⁸ At that time and under the influence of these classic works, the idea of the picturesque provided the reigning aesthetic ideal for English tourists, who pursued picturesque scenery in the Lake District, the Scottish Highlands, and even the Alps. Moreover, after the close of the eighteenth century, the idea of the picturesque continued in the nineteenth century to have a great impact on the appreciation of nature. In North America, it inspired the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and the essays of Henry David Thoreau.⁹ The mode of aesthetic experience governed by the idea of the picturesque was also exemplified in the American landscape paintings of the time, such as those of Thomas Cole and his pupil Frederic Church. And in the twentieth century, its influence can be detected in much nature painting and photography. Moreover, throughout this period it continued to dictate a very popular way of aesthetically experiencing nature. Indeed, this remains the mode of aesthetic appreciation commonly associated with ordinary tourism--that which sees and appreciates the natural world in light of the scenic images found in travel brochures, calendar photos, and especially picture postcards.

1b. Traditional Aesthetics of Nature: The formalist theory of art

Even as aesthetic appreciation of nature governed by the idea of the picturesque continued to be extremely popular in the early part of the twentieth century, a related but somewhat distinct approach to nature appreciation was generated by that period's most influential theory of art. This is the formalist theory of art, which was developed and defended by British art critics Roger Fry and most famously Clive Bell. As expounded by Bell, formalism was basically a theory about the nature of art. He held that what makes an object a work of art is an inherent property of it, an aesthetically moving combination of lines, shapes, and colors, and that aesthetic appreciation of art is restricted to the appreciation of this formal structure, which Bell called "significant form." He is well-known for his claim that:

⁷ Two standard treatments are Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London: G. P. Putnam's, 1927), and W. J. Hipple, Jr., *The Beautiful, the Sublime and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957).

⁸ William Gilpin, *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty, On Picturesque Travel, and On Sketching Landscape* [1792]; Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque* [1794]; Richard Payne Knight, *The Landscape* [1794], *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* [1805].

⁹ For example, see Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature: Addresses and Lectures* (Boston: J. Munroe, 1849) and David Henry Thoreau, "Walking," *Atlantic Monthly* 9, no. 56 (June 1862); selections from both are reprinted in Carlson and Lintott, *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism*.

To appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing but a sense of form and colour ...we need nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions.... The representative element in a work of art may or may not be harmful; always it is irrelevant.¹⁰

Bell was perhaps the greatest advocate of formal beauty as the proper and sole focus of aesthetic experience and he found such beauty mainly in the significant form of works of art. However, in line with the formalist theory, aesthetic appreciation in general was construed as the detached contemplation of the formal structure of any isolated object of appreciation. Thus, even Bell, whose aesthetic interest was almost exclusively devoted to art, could find aesthetic value in the landscape when it was experienced as, in his words, "a pure formal combination of lines and colours." As he put it:

All of us, I imagine, do, from time to time, get a vision of material objects as pure forms ...We see things...with the eye of an artist. Who has not, one at least in his life, had a sudden vision of landscape as pure form? For once, instead of seeing it as fields and cottages, he has felt it as lines and colours...he has contrived to see it as a pure formal combination of lines and colours.¹¹

Bell says we should see the landscape "with the eye of an artist." Like the tradition of picturesque landscape appreciation, Bell had in mind seeing the landscape as it might look in certain landscape paintings, but not exactly the same kind of paintings as those that were favored by the picturesque tradition. Understandably, Bell's view was more closely allied with the work of the artists of his own time, such as Paul Cezanne, who was apparently his favorite. For example, Cezanne's many famous paintings of Mount Sainte-Victore are classics of a certain kind of formal treatment of the landscape, in which nature is represented as patterns of shapes, lines, and colors. Throughout the first part of the twentieth century, various artists and schools of painters developed this kind of formal approach to landscape appreciation in a number of different ways. For example, American artist Georgia O'Keeffe is famous for her fluid formal renderings of mountain landscapes, as are the members of the less well known Canadian Group of Seven, such as Frederick Varley, Franklin Carmichael, and Lawren Harris. Formalism also had a great influence of the work of American nature photographers, such as the striking formal patterns in the black and white photographs of Edward Weston and especially Ansel Adams.

Although formalism and the tradition of the picturesque have somewhat different emphases and take slightly different kinds of art as their models, they are yet similar enough in their overall approach to the aesthetic appreciation of nature to come together in what might be called traditional

¹⁰ Clive Bell, *Art* [1913] (New York: G. P. Putnam' Sons, 1958), p. 30.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

aesthetics of nature. The overall approach combines features favored in picturesque appreciation, such as being, to return to Conron's words, "varied and irregular," "rich and forceful," and "vibrant with energy," with the prominence of bold lines, shapes, and colors that are favored by formalists. In this sense, traditional aesthetics of nature is the legacy of both the picturesque tradition and formalism. In popular aesthetic appreciation this legacy has given rise to an emphasis on striking and dramatic landscapes with scenic prospects, such as found in the Rocky Mountains of North America, where rugged mountains and clear water come together to contrast and complement one another. Ansel Adam's famous photograph, *The Tetons--Snake River* (1942) is a good example of a work that captures the ideal of formal, scenic beauty that is the legacy of the picturesque tradition and formalism.¹²

The role of traditional aesthetics of nature in the development of popular aesthetic appreciation of nature as well as environmental thought and action was clearly recognized in the middle of the last century. A classic example can be found in the writings of Aldo Leopold. In *A Sand County Almanac* published in 1949 and *Round River* in 1952, Leopold presented a vision of the relationship between aesthetic appreciation of nature and the natural environment that continues to shape contemporary understanding of the relevance of aesthetic appreciation to environmentalism. Nonetheless, although granting the importance of traditional aesthetics of nature, he yet expressed some concern about its role in shaping what he called the "taste for country":

The taste for country displays the same diversity in aesthetic competence among individuals as the taste for opera, or oils. There are those [the vast majority] who are willing to be herded in droves through 'scenic' places; who find mountains grand if they be proper mountains with waterfalls, cliffs, and lakes. To such the Kansas plains are tedious.¹³

Leopold's reservations about traditional aesthetics of nature foreshadow the concerns that I will examine in the next section. However, despite his reservations, there can be no doubt that traditional aesthetics of nature has played a major role in North American environmentalism. Environmental philosopher J. Baird Callicott claims that concerning environmental conservation and preservation, beauty has had a far greater impact than duty:

¹² Although I relate what I here call traditional aesthetics of nature to the historical developments of the idea of the picturesque and the formalist theory of art, certain aspects of this kind of view are defended in some recent work on the aesthetics of nature. For example, see Robert Stecker, "The Correct and the Appropriate in the Appreciation of Nature," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 37 (1997): 393-402; Donald W. Crawford, "Scenery and the Aesthetics of Nature," in A. Carlson and A. Berleant, eds., *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments* (Peterborough, Canada: Broadview Press, 2004); Thomas Leddy, "A Defense of Arts-Based Appreciation of Nature," *Environmental Ethics* 27 (2005): 299-315. Formal aesthetic appreciation of nature is defended in Nick Zangwill, "Formal Natural Beauty," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 101 (2001): 209-224.

¹³ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac with Essays on Conservation from Round River* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 179-180; selections are reprinted in Carlson and Lintott, *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism*.

Natural aesthetic evaluation...has made a terrific difference to American conservation policy and management. One of the main reasons that we have set aside certain natural areas as national, state, and county parks is because they are considered beautiful. In the conservation and resource management arena, natural aesthetics has, indeed, been much more important historically than environmental ethics. Many more of our conservation and management decisions have been motivated by aesthetic rather than ethical values, by beauty instead of duty.¹⁴

2. The Problem

As made clear in the quotation from Callicott, traditional aesthetics of nature has played a major role in North American environmentalism. North America's rich heritage of national and regional parks and preserves are largely the result of that fact that these areas were found to be beautiful in light of the appreciative approach grounded in traditional aesthetics of nature. The same is true in many other parts of the world. As noted, initially traditional aesthetics of nature was developed in connection with the picturesque landscape tradition and later on it was expanded and supplemented by formalism. Both of these approaches to the appreciation of nature have contributed to the enormous impact that traditional aesthetics of nature has had on environmental protection and conservation. However, more recently the relationship between the aesthetics of nature and environmentalism has been less positive. Increasingly individuals interested in the preservation and conservation of natural environments have not found in traditional aesthetics of nature the resources that they believe necessary in order to fully carry out an environmentalist agenda. So, we might ask, what exactly is the problem with traditional aesthetics of nature? What do environmentalists find wrong with this approach to the aesthetic appreciation of nature?

2a. The Problem: The failings of traditional aesthetics of nature

The problem with traditional aesthetics of nature from the point of view of contemporary environmentalism is that it has a number of failings--five, in fact. To put it succinctly, traditional aesthetics of nature has been criticized for being: 1. anthropocentric, 2. scenery-obsessed, 3. superficial and trivial, 4. subjective, and 5. morally vacuous. I briefly discuss each of these in turn, highlighting their importance in the field by quotations from individuals who have recently articulated the particular failing.¹⁵

¹⁴ Callicott, "Leopold's Land Aesthetic," in Carlson and Lintott, *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism*, p. 106.

¹⁵ Some of these criticisms, especially that traditional aesthetics of nature tends to be superficial and scenery-obsessed, have been noted since the beginnings of the renewed interest in the aesthetics of nature. See, for example, Mark Sagoff, "On Preserving the Natural Environment," *Yale Law Journal* 84 (1974): 205-267, as well as Allen Carlson, "On the Possibility of Quantifying Scenic Beauty," *Landscape Planning* 4 (1977): 131-172.

Anthropocentrism: The charge that traditional aesthetics of nature is anthropocentric or human-centered is directed squarely at the picturesque tradition of nature appreciation by a number of commentators. There is a sense, of course, in which all aesthetic appreciation is, and indeed must be, from the point of view of a particular human appreciator, but the criticism that is directed against traditional aesthetics of nature has to do with the specific conception of nature and our relationship to it that seems implicit in traditional aesthetics of nature and in particular in the picturesque landscape tradition. Part of this conception involves the anthropocentric thought that nature exists primarily for our pleasure. For example, landscape geographer Ronald Rees contends that:

...the picturesque...simply confirmed our anthropocentrism by suggesting that nature exists to please as well as to serve us. Our ethics, if that word can be used to describe our attitudes and behavior toward the environment, have lagged behind our aesthetics. It is an unfortunate lapse which allows us to abuse our local environments and venerate the Alps and the Rockies.¹⁶

Scenery-obsession: Although there can be no doubt that traditional aesthetics of nature, and the picturesque landscape tradition in particular, is focused on scenery, the second criticism is that traditional aesthetics of nature goes far beyond this focus to the point of obsession. And although it may be granted that there is much of aesthetic value in the scenery that is favored by traditional aesthetics of nature, when the point of view becomes an obsession with scenery, the upshot is that other less scenic environments are excluded from appreciation. This problem is especially acute concerning environments that may be ecologically valuable, but do not fit the traditional idea of a scenic landscape, such as prairies, badlands, and wetlands.¹⁷ As environmental aesthetician Yuriko Saito puts it in her essay, "The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature," the upshot is that such environments are deemed "lacking in aesthetic values":

The picturesque...approach to nature has...encouraged us to look for and appreciate primarily the *scenically* interesting and beautiful parts of our environment. As a result those environments devoid of effective pictorial composition, excitement, or amusement (that is, those not worthy of being represented in a picture) are considered lacking in aesthetic values.¹⁸

Superficiality and Triviality: The third criticism, that the traditional aesthetics of nature is

¹⁶ Ronald Rees, "The Taste for Mountain Scenery," *History Today* 25 (1975), p. 312.

¹⁷ On wetlands, in particular, see Allen Carlson, "Soiden Ihaileminen: Kosteikkojen Vaikea Kauneus" (Admiring Mirelands: The Difficult Beauty of Wetlands), in Heikkilä-Palo ed., *Suo on Kaunis*, (Helsinki: Maakenki Oy, 1999), pp. 173-181; Holmes Rolston, III, "Aesthetics in the Swamps," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 43 (2000): 584-597; and J. Baird Callicott, "Wetland Gloom and Wetland Glory," *Philosophy and Geography* 6 (2003): 33-45.

¹⁸ Yuriko Saito, "The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998), p. 101; reprinted in Carlson and Lintott, *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism*.

frequently superficial and trivial, is perhaps the most grave of these five charges, and it is directed at both the picturesque landscape tradition and formalism. The heart of the criticism lies in the fact that traditional aesthetics of nature is dependent on artistic models and does not treat nature as nature, as what it in fact is. Callicott does not mince words in putting the point:

...we continue to admire and preserve primarily "landscapes," "scenery," and "views" according to essentially eighteenth century standards of taste inherited from Gilpin, Price, and their contemporaries. Our tastes in natural beauty...remain fixed on visual and formal properties....Western appreciation of natural beauty is...derivative from art. The prevailing natural aesthetic, therefore, is not autonomous: it does not flow naturally from nature itself; it is not directly oriented to nature on nature's own terms....It is superficial and narcissistic. In a word, it is trivial.¹⁹

Subjectivity: The criticism that traditional aesthetics of nature is subjective is especially significant from the point of view of environmental thought and action, although it is perhaps more clearly a failing of the tradition of picturesque landscape appreciation than of formalism.²⁰ Be that as it may, the problem is that if traditional aesthetics of nature yields only subjective judgements about nature's aesthetic value, then aesthetic value will be of little use for serving environmentalist goals such as protection and preservation. With only subjectivity, those making environmental assessment decisions may be reluctant to acknowledge the relevance and importance of aesthetic value, regarding it simply as based on, at worst, completely subjective whims or, at best, only relativistic, transient, and soft-headed cultural or artistic ideals. Environmental philosopher Janna Thompson puts the worry as follows:

If beauty in nature...is merely in the eyes of the beholder, than no general moral obligation arises out of aesthetic judgment. A judgement of value that is merely personal and subjective gives us no way of arguing that everyone ought to learn to appreciate something, or at least to regard it as worthy of preservation.²¹

Moral vacuity: The last charge made against traditional aesthetics of nature, that it is morally vacuous, is again especially important for sound environmental thought and action. This is because environmentalists wish to bring aesthetic appreciation of nature in line with ethical obligations to

¹⁹ Callicott, "Leopold's Land Aesthetic," in Carlson and Lintott, *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism*, pp. 108-9.

²⁰ Bell's formalism is often accused of supporting only subjective judgments about aesthetic value, since it seems to provide no grounds for making such judgements other than personal experience. However, it has recently been argued that formalism, more so than some competing points of view, can in fact underwrite a degree of objectivity of aesthetic value. See Glenn Parsons, *Aesthetics and Nature* (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 41-43.

²¹ Janna Thompson, "Aesthetics and the Value of Nature," *Environmental Ethics* 17 (1995), p. 292; reprinted in Carlson and Lintott, *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism*.

preserve and maintain ecological sound and healthy environments. But neither the scenery endorsed by the picturesque landscape tradition nor the lines, shapes, and colors favored by formalism seems to give any support whatsoever for any ethical judgments. But if traditional aesthetics of nature has no ethical import, then it is morally neutral and ultimately there is no way of linking, as it is put by some environmental philosophers, beauty and duty. As noted above, landscape geographer Ronald Rees contends that in traditional aesthetics of nature:

Our ethics, if that word can be used to describe our attitudes and behavior toward the environment, have lagged behind our aesthetics. It is an unfortunate lapse which allows us to abuse our local environments and venerate the Alps and the Rockies.²²

Landscape historian Malcolm Andrews agrees, arguing that there is a general moral fault with the picturesque tradition. He asserts that: "the trouble is that the Picturesque enterprise in its later stage, with its almost exclusive emphasis on visual appreciation, entailed a suppression of the spectator's moral response."²³

2b. The Problem: The requirements of environmentalism

I have suggested that the problem with traditional aesthetics of nature from the point of view of contemporary environmentalism is that it has at least five particular failings: that it is: 1. anthropocentric, 2. scenery-obsessed, 3. superficial and trivial, 4. subjective, and 5. morally vacuous. In light of these failings, it might be asked: What does environmentalism require from the aesthetics of nature? Concerning a model of appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature, what are what might be called the *Requirements of Environmentalism*?

One way to determine the requirements that environmentalism has for an adequate aesthetics of nature is by reference to the criticisms that individuals interested in environmental conservation and protection have made of traditional aesthetics of nature. These criticisms may be contrasted with solutions or, perhaps better, antidotes and in the comparisons of the two, we are able to see more clearly what environmentalism wants in the aesthetics of nature, that is, exactly what the requirements of environmentalism are. In terms of the five failings, it seems that what environmentalism requires from the aesthetics of nature is an approach that is: 1. acentric rather than simply anthropocentric, 2. environment-focused rather than scenery-obsessed, 3. serious rather than superficial and trivial, 4. objective rather than subjective, and 5. morally engaged rather than morally vacuous. As I have done with the failings of traditional aesthetics of nature, I briefly discuss each of these requirements, highlighting their importance by quotations from individuals who have articulated them.

²² Rees, "The Taste for Mountain Scenery," p. 312.

²³ Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 59.

Acentrism: The charge that traditional aesthetics of nature is anthropocentric involves the idea that it is human-centered, but, as noted, aesthetic experience in general is seemingly always from the point of view of a specific human appreciator. However, to the extent that an appreciator can move away from his or her own particular point of view and attempt to achieve, as it is sometimes expressed, a “view from nowhere,” there will be a corresponding reduction in the human-centered or anthropocentric character of the resulting aesthetic experience. The basic idea is that in order to have an adequate aesthetic appreciation of nature, an appreciator must strive for an experience that is not from any particular point of view, human or otherwise. It is far from clear exactly what it would be for a human appreciator to adopt such a fully non-anthropocentric point of view. Nonetheless, according to Canadian philosopher Stan Godlovitch, an antidote for anthropocentrism in aesthetics of nature and thus a requirement of environmentalism is to attempt to achieve what he calls an acentric approach to appreciating the natural world:

To justify protecting nature as it is and not merely as it is for us,...a natural aesthetic must forswear the anthropocentric limits that...define and dominate our aesthetic response.... How [is] such a non-anthropocentric aesthetic...possible...I propose that only acentric environmentalism takes into account nature as a whole; if we wish to adopt an acentric environmentalism, we require a corresponding acentric natural aesthetic to ground it.... In acentric positions, the value expressed...cannot reflect the point of view of the recipient.²⁴

Environment-focus: If aesthetic appreciation of nature is not to be scenery-obsessed as picturesque landscape appreciation certainly is and as formalist appreciation frequently is, then the focus of aesthetic appreciation must be broadened to include any and all kinds of environments. It must be environment-focused rather than tied to particular kinds of environments and/or particular kinds of features of environments. Here, however, the antidote is somewhat less radical than endorsing a theoretical complex notion such as Godlovitch’s acentricism. Rather, at least according to environmental philosopher Holmes Rolston, it only involves recognizing a feature of the experience of natural environments that in fact should be quite obvious once it is given some thought. The requirement of environmentalism in this case is the recognition of the fact that appreciation of nature must involve participation and perhaps even a degree of immersion:

Aesthetic appreciation of nature, at the level of forests and landscapes, requires embodied participation, immersion, and struggle. We initially may think of forests as scenery to be looked upon. That is a mistake. A forest is entered, not viewed. It is doubtful that one can experience a forest from a roadside pullover, any more than on television....You do not really engage a forest until you are well within it.... In the forest itself, there is no scenery.²⁵

²⁴ Stan Godlovitch, “Icebreakers: Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics,” *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 11 (1994), pp. 16-17; reprinted in Carlson and Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*.

²⁵ Holmes Rolston, III, “Aesthetic Experience in Forests,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998), p. 162; reprinted in Carlson and Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*.

Seriousness: The requirement that the aesthetics of nature should accommodate aesthetic appreciation that is serious rather than simply superficial and trivial is seemingly quite obvious as well. However, appreciation that is limited to scenery and/or to the pleasing lines, shapes, and colors of nature cannot really be considered very serious. It would seem that for this requirement to be met attention must be directed toward what nature really is and the qualities that it actually has. Early in the development of contemporary aesthetics of nature, in his groundbreaking 1966 essay, "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty," Ronald Hepburn suggested this requirement of environmentalism by arguing that moving from aesthetic experience of nature that is superficial to that which is serious requires that appreciation be "true to nature," which involves focusing on the real character of the object of appreciation, rather than on, as in his particular example, a passing resemblance. Hepburn put the point as follows:

Suppose the outline of a cumulo-nimbus cloud resembles that of a basket of washing, and we amuse ourselves in dwelling upon this resemblance. Suppose that on another occasion we ...try instead to realize the inner turbulence of the cloud, the winds sweeping up within and around it, determining its structure and visible form. Should we not...say that this latter experience was less superficial...than the other, that it is truer to nature, and for that reason more worth having?... If there can be a passage, in art, from easy beauty to difficult and more serious beauty, there can also be such passage in aesthetic contemplation of nature.²⁶

Objectivity: The question of the objectivity of aesthetics judgments is an issue for aesthetics in general, whether of nature or of art. Indeed, attempting to justify the objectivity of aesthetic judgments has been a major concern of philosophical aesthetics at least since David Hume's famous essay "Of the Standard of Taste," in which he attempted to ground objectivity in the judgments of informed and practiced critics, whom he called "true judges."²⁷ The success of such attempts is an issue of continuing philosophical debate. However, even if one grants some degree of objectivity to aesthetic judgments about works of art, there is still the worry that the justification of objectivity for such judgments cannot be extended to aesthetic judgments about nature.²⁸ Moreover, the problem is especially acute concerning the aesthetics of nature, for, as noted, if aesthetics of nature cannot support objective judgements about nature's aesthetic value, then aesthetic value will be of little use for serving environmentalist goals such as protection and preservation. Without some degree of objectivity, those making environmental decisions may be reluctant to acknowledge the relevance and importance of aesthetic value. Thus, the objectivity requirement is a particularly important requirement of environmentalism. As environmental phi-

²⁶ Ronald Hepburn, "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty," in B. Williams and A. Montefiore, eds., *British Analytical Philosophy* (London: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 305; reprinted in Carlson and Berlant, *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*.

²⁷ David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste" [1757].

²⁸ This concern has been expressed by a number of aestheticians. For example, see George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), pp. 169, 199, or Kendall Walton, "Categories of Art," *Philosophical Review* 79 (1970): 334-367.

philosopher Janna Thompson observes:

The link...between aesthetic judgment and ethical obligation fails unless there are objective grounds--grounds that rational, sensitive people can accept--for thinking that something has value.²⁹

The importance of the requirement is put in even stronger terms by one of North American's leading aestheticians, Noel Carroll, who contends that "any...picture of nature appreciation, if it is to be taken seriously, must have...means...for solving the problem of the objectivity of nature appreciation."³⁰

Moral engagement: The question of moral engagement, like that of objectivity, has deeper roots than simply the tradition of picturesque landscape appreciation or formalism and again infects the whole of aesthetics, not just the aesthetics of nature. Part of the source lies in the notion of disinterestedness, which, as noted, underwrites the picturesque tradition and in its strongest form requires that aesthetic experience be purged of all of an appreciator's particular concerns and interests, including the moral. In the recent history of aesthetics, this idea was reaffirmed in the position known as aestheticism, the view that aesthetics and ethics are two separate realms and thus that aesthetic appreciation is not subject to any moral constraints. This view is historically linked to formalism and is associated with late nineteenth century thinkers such as Walter Pater and especially Oscar Wilde. Wilde said he could not understand how any work of art can be criticized from a moral standpoint, since the sphere of art and the sphere of ethics are "absolutely distinct and separate."³¹ However, this position, as indicated by Wilde's remark, applies primarily to art, and, although aestheticism may have some plausibility for "pure" works of art, which have been, at least within some traditions, regarded as isolated, autonomous entities, it is much less plausible when applied to nature. Thus the key to supporting the last requirement of environmentalism, that the aesthetics of nature must be morally engaged, lies in the differences between nature and art. Given the character of the natural world, as philosopher Patricia Matthews points out, aesthetic appreciation is such that the aesthetic and the ethical are more in harmony with one another. As she puts it:

Our aesthetic assessments take into consideration not only formal elements such as color and design, but also the role that an object plays within a system. [This] allows for a complex,

²⁹ Thompson, "Aesthetics and the Value of Nature," p. 292.

³⁰ Noel Carroll, "On Being Moved by Nature: Between Religion and Natural History," in S. Kemal and I. Gaskell, eds., *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 257; reprinted in Carlson and Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*.

³¹ Oscar Wilde, "Letter to the Editor," *St. James Gazette*, June 25, 1890, in R. Ellmann, ed., *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Vintage, 1969), p. 236. This kind of position is generally out of favor at present; for example, see the essays in Jerrold Levinson, ed., *Aesthetics and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

deep, and meaningful aesthetic appreciation of nature. Further with this deeper appreciation ...facts about the environmental impact of certain species (for example) can affect our aesthetic appreciation. In this way, our aesthetic and ethical assessments of what ought to be preserved in nature may be more harmonious.³²

To recap, the requirements of environmentalism for the aesthetics of nature are that it should support aesthetic appreciation of nature that is: 1. acentric rather than simply anthropocentric, 2. environment-focused rather than scenery-obsessed, 3. serious rather than superficial and trivial, 4. objective rather than subjective, and 5. morally engaged rather than morally vacuous. The question now is the extent to which the new aesthetics of nature that has been developed recently within contemporary environmental aesthetics can meet these requirements and thus foster a stronger and more positive relationship with environmentalism than was possible by means of traditional aesthetics of nature.

3. Contemporary Environmental Aesthetics

Environmental aesthetics is one of the two or three major new areas of aesthetics to have emerged in the last part of the twentieth century. It focuses on philosophical issues concerning appreciation of the world at large as it is constituted not simply by particular objects but also by environments themselves. The field initially considered primarily natural environments and developed a number of different positions concerning the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature. These positions are frequently divided into two different camps, labeled in various ways, such as non-cognitive and cognitive or non-conceptual and conceptual. Positions of the first type stress emotional and feeling-related states and responses, which are taken to be the less cognitive dimensions of aesthetic experience. By contrast, positions of the second type contend that appreciation must be guided by the nature of objects of appreciation and thus that knowledge about their origins, types, and properties is necessary for serious, appropriate aesthetic appreciation. I will first consider non-cognitive approaches and then cognitive ones, focusing on the most prominent example of each type and assessing it in light of the five requirements of environmentalism.

3a. Contemporary Environmental Aesthetics: Non-cognitive approaches

There are a number of so-called non-cognitive approaches concerning the aesthetic appreciation of nature. However, “non-cognitive” here should not be taken in its older philosophical sense of being primarily or only “emotive.” Rather it indicates only that these views argue that something other than a cognitive component is the central feature of aesthetic appreciation of nature. Different positions focus on various kinds of emotional and feeling-related states and responses, such as

³² Patricia Matthews, “Scientific Knowledge and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60 (2002), p. 38; reprinted in Carlson and Lintott, *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism*.

arousal, affection, reverence, intimacy, engagement, wonder, and ineffability. For example, what may be called the arousal model is developed by aesthetician Noel Carroll. Carroll holds that we may appreciate nature simply by opening ourselves to it and thus being emotionally aroused by it. He contends that this less intellectual, more visceral experience of nature is a way of legitimately aesthetically appreciating it without invoking any particular knowledge about the object of appreciation.³³ Another alternative, which may be called the mystery model of nature appreciation, is defended by Canadian philosopher Stan Godlovitch. Godlovitch contends that neither knowledge nor emotional attachment is able to yield any real, appropriate appreciation of nature, for nature itself is essentially alien, aloof, distant, and unknowable. The approach contends that the only appropriate experience of nature is a sense of mystery involving a state of appreciative incomprehension, a feeling of being separate from nature and of not belonging to it.³⁴

By far the most fully developed of the non-cognitive approaches is Arnold Berleant's aesthetics of engagement. Berleant rejects many traditional ideas about aesthetic experience not only concerning nature but also art. Thus, he rejects much of traditional aesthetics of nature, such as the external, distanced appreciator favored by the picturesque tradition and by formalism. Moreover, he argues that the idea of disinterestedness involves a mistaken analysis of the aesthetic and that this is most evident in the aesthetic experience of nature. According to the engagement approach, disinterestedness, with its isolating, distancing, and objectifying gaze, is out of place in the aesthetic appreciation of nature, for it wrongly abstracts both natural objects and appreciators from the environments in which they properly belong and in which appropriate appreciation is achieved. Rather the approach recommends that traditional dichotomies, such as between the object of appreciation and the appreciator, be abandoned, contending that aesthetic experience involves a participatory engagement of the appreciator within the object of appreciation. Thus, this approach stresses the contextual dimensions of nature and our multisensory experience of it. Viewing the environment as a seamless unity of organisms, perceptions, and places, the engagement model beckons appreciators to immerse themselves in the natural environment in an attempt to obliterate dichotomies and ultimately to reduce to as small a degree as possible the distance between themselves and the natural world. In short, aesthetic experience is taken to involve a "total sensory immersion" of the appreciator within the object of appreciation.³⁵ As Berleant puts it:

³³ Carroll, "On Being Moved by Nature," in Kemal and Gaskell, *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*. Despite the centrality this model grants to emotional arousal, it is considered by some to be a cognitive rather than a non-cognitive approach, since Carroll accepts what is known as the cognitive theory of emotions, by which emotional responses can be judged appropriate or inappropriate.

³⁴ Godlovitch, "Icebreakers." See also Stan Godlovitch, "Valuing Nature and the Autonomy of Natural Aesthetics," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 38 (1998): 180-197; reprinted in Carlson and Lintott, *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism*.

³⁵ See Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), especially Chapter 11, "The Aesthetic of Art and Nature," reprinted in Carlson and Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*; Arnold Berleant, *Living in the Landscape: Toward an Aesthetics of Environment* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997); and Arnold Berleant, *Aesthetics and Environment: Variations on a Theme* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

The boundlessness of the natural world does not just surround us; it assimilates us. Not only are we unable to sense absolute limits in nature; we cannot distance the natural world from ourselves. Perceiving environments from within, as it were, looking not at it but being in it, nature...is transformed into a realm in which we live as participants, not observers...the aesthetic mark of all such times is...total engagement, a sensory immersion in the natural world.³⁶

Berleant's aesthetics of engagement is clearly superior in a number of ways to traditional aesthetics of nature as it has been developed in terms of picturesque landscape appreciation or formalist appreciation. An appreciator who is totally engaged and sensory immersed in a natural environment contrasts dramatically with a distanced appreciator who focuses only on formalist, picturesque scenery. Consequently, when we turn to the requirements of environmentalism, the aesthetics of engagement can be evaluated very favorably concerning some of the requirements. It can be assessed on each of the five requirements as follows:

1. **Acentric:** VERY STRONG--The aesthetics of engagement's stress on total sensory immersion in the natural world seems to facilitate about as an acentric a point of view as is humanly possible, since it seems to explicitly call for abandoning traditional dichotomies, such as between the object of appreciation and the appreciator, and thus it would seem the appreciator's own particular point of view is also abandoned.
2. **Environment-focused:** VERY STRONG--The aesthetics of engagement's stress on an appreciator's engaged participation focuses on whole environments and explicitly does not focus on scenery or formal composition. One cannot be immersed within scenery!
3. **Serious:** UNCLEAR--The sensory immersion mode of appreciation does not seem to require any degree of seriousness, although it may allow for serious appreciation to the extent that such appreciation is consistent with immersion.
4. **Objective:** WEAK--The aesthetics of engagement's stress on total sensory immersion in the natural world seems to facilitate a subjective rather than an objective point of view. Total sensory immersion and the total abandonment of the dichotomy between the object of appreciation and the appreciator will make it difficult for the appreciator to be objective.
5. **Morally engaged:** WEAK--The aesthetics of engagement's subjectivity undercuts the possibility of a compelling moral stance on environmental issues, for without objectivity, moral assessments can be dismissed simply as no more than personal preferences.

In Sum: The aesthetics of engagement is very strong concerning acentricism and environment-focus, unclear regarding seriousness, and seemingly weak in regard to objectivity and moral engagement.

³⁶ Berleant, *Aesthetics of Environment*, pp. 169-70.

3b. Contemporary Environmental Aesthetics: Cognitive approaches

Standing in contrast to the non-cognitive approaches are a number of positions roughly classified as cognitive, since they are united by the idea that what is central to appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature is knowledge and information about the object of appreciation. In general, they hold that, in the words of environmental aesthetician Yuriko Saito, nature must be “appreciated on its own terms.”³⁷ Thus, for example, American philosopher Marcia Muelder Eaton holds that in the aesthetic appreciation on nature, we must carefully distinguish between facts about nature and fictions, since she thinks that while the former are necessary for appropriate aesthetic appreciation, the latter can often lead us astray and pervert our appreciation.³⁸ Other cognitive approaches, including Saito’s, also emphasize other kinds of knowledge and information, claiming that appreciating nature “on its own terms” may well involve experiencing it in light of various local, folk, or historical traditions. Thus, for appropriate aesthetic appreciation, regional narratives and folkloric or even mythological stories about nature are endorsed either as complementary with or as alternative to factual information.³⁹

The best-known cognitive approach is what is called scientific cognitivism. Like most cognitive positions, which in general reject the idea that the aesthetic experience of art provides satisfactory models for the appreciation of nature, scientific cognitivism stresses the fact that nature is not art and thus that it must be appreciated as nature and not as art. Nonetheless, it also holds that aesthetic appreciation of nature is yet analogous to that of art in both its character and its structure. Thus, it contends that art appreciation can show some of what is required in an adequate model of nature appreciation. For example, in serious, appropriate aesthetic appreciation of works of art, it is essential that we experience works as what they in fact are and in light of knowledge of their real natures. Thus, for instance, appropriate appreciation of a work of art such as Jackson Pollock’s *One (#31)* (1950) requires that we experience it as a painting and moreover as an action painting within the general school of mid 1950s American abstract expressionism. Therefore, it is necessary to appreciate it in light of knowledge about paintings, especially mid 1950s American abstract expressionism and in particular action painting. In short, in the case of art, serious, appropriate aesthetic appreciation is informed by art history and art criticism. However, since

³⁷ Yuriko Saito, “Appreciating Nature on Its Own Terms,” *Environmental Ethics* 20 (1998): 135-149; reprinted in Carlson and Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*.

³⁸ Marcia Muelder Eaton, “Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 149-156; reprinted in Carlson and Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*; See also Marcia Muelder Eaton, “The Beauty that Requires Health,” in Joan Iverson Nassauer, ed., *Placing Nature: Culture and Landscape Ecology* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1997), pp. 87-106; reprinted in Carlson and Lintott, *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism*.

³⁹ For example, see Saito, “Appreciating Nature on Its Own Terms”; Yrjö Sepänmaa, *The Beauty of Environment: A General Model for Environmental Aesthetics* (Helsinki: Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, 1986; Second Edition, Denton, TX: Environmental Ethics Books, 1993); Thomas Heyd, “Aesthetic Appreciation and the Many Stories about Nature,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 41 (2001): 125-137; reprinted in Carlson and Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*.

scientific cognitivism also stresses that nature must be appreciated as nature and not as art, it contends that, although the knowledge given by art criticism and art history is relevant to art appreciation, in nature appreciation the relevant knowledge is that provided by natural history, that is, the knowledge provided by the natural sciences, especially geology, biology, and ecology. In short, the idea is that to appreciate nature as nature or “on its own terms” is to appreciate it as it is characterized by natural science.⁴⁰ As I put it in my version of scientific cognitivism:

If to appropriately aesthetically appreciate art we must have knowledge of art forms, classifications of works, and artistic traditions, then to appropriately aesthetically appreciate nature we must have knowledge of different natural environments and of the different systems and elements within those environments. As the knowledge provided by art critics and art historians equips us to aesthetically appreciate art, that provided by naturalists, ecologist, geologists, and natural historians equip us to aesthetically appreciate nature.⁴¹

In spite of holding that aesthetic appreciation of nature must be analogous to that of art in its nature and its structure, scientific cognitivism strongly rejects traditional aesthetics of nature as it has been developed in terms of picturesque landscape appreciation or formalist appreciation.⁴² An appreciator who is well informed by scientific knowledge about a natural environment contrasts dramatically with a distanced appreciator who focuses only on formalist, picturesque scenery. In fact, there is no significant analogy between formalist appreciation of art or picturesque-influenced appreciation of art and the model of art appreciation on which scientific cognitivism bases its analogy between nature appreciation and art appreciation. However, although scientific cognitivism rejects the tradition of picturesque landscape appreciation and formalism, it does follow in the footsteps of another tradition of nature appreciation. This is the position developed in the middle of the last century by Aldo Leopold. As noted, in *A Sand County Almanac* and *Round River*, Leopold presented a vision of the relationship between aesthetic appreciation of nature and the natural environment that continues to shape contemporary understanding of the relevance of aesthetic appreciation to environmental thought and action. This view is sometimes called ecological aesthetics or eco-aesthetics. It has the same cognitive commitment as scientific cognitivism does to the role of scientific knowledge in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. The point is made by environmental philosopher J. Baird Callicott as follows:

⁴⁰ See Allen Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment: The Appreciation of Nature, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2000). For shorter discussions, see, for example, Allen Carlson, “Appreciation and the Natural Environment,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1979): 267-276; reprinted in Carlson and Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*; or Allen Carlson, “The Requirements for an Adequate Aesthetics of Nature,” *Environmental Philosophy* 4 (2007): 1-12.

⁴¹ Allen Carlson, “Aesthetic Appreciation of the Natural Environment,” in R. G. Botzler and S. J. Armstrong, eds., *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*, Second Edition (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998), p.128; reprinted in Carlson and Lintott, *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism*.

⁴² See, for example, Allen Carlson, “Formal Qualities and the Natural Environment,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 13 (1979): 99-114; and Glenn Parsons and Allen Carlson, “New Formalism and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 62 (2004): 363-376.

[Leopold's] land aesthetic is sophisticated and cognitive, not naive and hedonic, it delineates a refined taste in natural environments and a cultivated natural sensibility. The basis of such refinement or cultivation is natural history, and more especially evolutionary and ecological biology.⁴³

How then does scientific cognitivism fair in terms of the requirements of environmentalism? In general, it can be assessed regarding each of the five requirements as follows:

1. **Acentric:** STRONG--Scientific cognitivism's stress on scientific knowledge promotes an acentric point of view similar to that of the scientific viewpoint, which is one of the more or less acentric ways of knowing. However, this point of view may not be as acentric as that resulting from the immersion endorsed by the aesthetics of engagement.
2. **Environment-focused:** STRONG--Scientific cognitivism's stress on environmental sciences focuses appreciation on environments rather than on scenery. There is no ecological science concerning scenery!
3. **Serious:** STRONG--Scientific cognitivism's stress on scientific knowledge promotes appreciation that is serious in the sense of attending to what nature really is and to the properties it really has.
4. **Objective:** VERY STRONG--Scientific cognitivism's stress on scientific knowledge promotes a very objective point of view, since science is one of the main paradigms of objectivity.⁴⁴
5. **Morally engaged:** UNCLEAR--Scientific cognitivism's objectivity makes possible, although does not require, a compelling moral stance on environmental issues. However, it is sometimes argued that scientific knowledge is morally neutral and thus promotes such neutrality.

In Sum: Scientific cognitivism is at least strong concerning most of the requirements of environmentalism and especially strong in regard to objectivity, although it remains unclear concerning moral engagement.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, I think there are five main points that follow from the preceding investigation of traditional aesthetics of nature, the five requirements of environmentalism, and contemporary aesthetics of nature. The first is that if we have to choose between the aesthetics of engagement and scientific cognitivism, then, on balance, the latter scores somewhat higher than the former on the five requirements of environmentalism. Second, however, we need not choose between them,

⁴³ Callicott, "Leopold's Land Aesthetic," in Carlson and Lintott, *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism*, p. 116.

⁴⁴ See Allen Carlson, "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment, and Objectivity," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 40 (1981): 15-27. For follow up, see Glenn Parsons, "Freedom and Objectivity in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 46 (2006): 17-37, and Ned Hettinger, "Objectivity in Environmental Aesthetics and Environmental Protection," in Carlson and Lintott, *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism*, pp. 413-437.

since, although the two positions have different emphases, there is no theoretical conflict between them, since each gives only necessary, not sufficient, conditions for appropriate aesthetic appreciation.⁴⁵ There is perhaps some practical tension generated by the two approaches, owing to the appreciative difficulty of being totally engaged with a natural environment and yet at the same time taking into account knowledge that is relevant to its appropriate aesthetic appreciation. However, this kind of bringing together and balancing of feeling and knowing, of emotion and cognition, is the very heart of aesthetic experience.

The third conclusion, therefore, is that concerning the five requirements of environmentalism, since the aesthetics of engagement is especially strong in regard to the first two requirements, the acentric and the environment-focused requirements, and scientific cognitivism is stronger in regard to the other three requirements, the seriousness, objectivity, and morally engaged requirements, the best alternative seems to be bringing the two positions together as a single unified approach in an attempt to adequately meet all five of the requirements of environmentalism. This third conclusion is forcefully endorsed by environmental philosopher Holmes Rolston in his essay "From Beauty to Duty: Aesthetics of Nature and Environmental Ethics":

Can aesthetics be an adequate foundation for an environmental ethic? This depends on how deep your aesthetics goes. No, where most aestheticians begin, rather shallowly... Yes, increasingly, where aesthetics itself comes to find and to be founded on natural history, with humans emplacing themselves appropriately on such landscapes. Does environmental ethics need such aesthetics to be adequately founded? Yes, indeed.⁴⁶

Given this kind of unified position, in which, as Rolston puts it, "aesthetics itself comes to find and to be founded on natural history, with humans emplacing themselves appropriately on such landscapes," the fourth conclusion is that, concerning the requirements of environmentalism, contemporary environmental aesthetics, as represented by the aesthetics of engagement and scientific cognitivism, is a substantial advance over traditional picturesque-influenced aesthetics and formalist aesthetics of nature. Hence, the fifth conclusion is that unlike traditional picturesque aesthetics and formalism, contemporary environmental aesthetics mandates the aesthetic appreciation not simply of scenic environments but also of other kinds of natural environments. It encour-

⁴⁵ That non-cognitive and cognitive approaches are not necessarily in conflict with one another is also suggested by other philosophers. For example, in presenting his arousal model, Noel Carroll remarks: "In defending this alternative mode of nature appreciation, I am not offering it in place of Carlson's environmental model...I'm for coexistence." See Carroll, "On Being Moved by Nature," in Kemal and Gaskell, *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, p. 246.

⁴⁶ Holmes Rolston, III, "From Beauty to Duty: Aesthetics of Nature and Environmental Ethics," in Carlson and Lintott, *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism*, p. 337. For an overview of Rolston's aesthetics, see Allen Carlson, "'We see beauty now where we could not see it before': Rolston's Aesthetics of Nature," in C. Preston and W. Ouderkirk, eds., *Nature, Value, Duty: Life on Earth with Holmes Rolston, III* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), pp. 103-124.

ages the aesthetic appreciation not simply of scenic mountain landscapes, but also of less conventionally scenic, but nonetheless aesthetically magnificent environments, such as those of the desert, the swamp, the salt marsh, the savanna, the prairie, the tundra, the forest, the jungle--indeed every kind of natural environment.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Some parts of this essay are based on Allen Carlson, "Environmental Aesthetics," in E. N. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, (Stanford: Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2008), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/environmental-aesthetics/>>.