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Lee, Keekok, "Beauty for Ever?"

Lee, Keekok. “Beauty for Ever?” *Environmental Values* 4, no. 3 (1995): 213–25. doi:10.3197/096327195776679510 .

This paper is not primarily about the philosophy of beauty with regard to landscape evaluation. Neither is it basically about the place of aesthetics in environmental philosophy. Rather, its aim is to argue that, while aesthetics has a clear role to play, it cannot form the basis of an adequate environmental philosophy without presupposing that natural processes and their products have no role to play independent of the human evaluation of them in terms of their beauty. The limitations, especially of a subjective aesthetics, are brought out through examining the decision of the National Trust in the Lake District to restore Yew Tree Tarn, thereby “to ensure its beauty will be permanent.” But should a landscape (an ecosystem for that matter) be “frozen” against natural changes in order that its beauty be preserved “permanently?” If not, what counter principle(s) can one invoke to argue against such a philosophy of management or at least to limit such intervention in its name? The National Trust is committed “to preserving the beauty and unique character of the Lake District.” Its unique character includes its geological formations which make the area beautiful. But geological processes are dynamic. Should their products necessarily be subordinated to aesthetic considerations? If so, are they not in danger of being treated like a work of art, an artefact which we, humans, are entitled to preserve against change? In a conflict between the requirement of conserving beauty of the landscape on the one hand and natural processes at work which might undermine that beauty on the other, should aesthetic considerations always have priority? (Source: The White Horse Press)

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