

The Loss of Sky-Blue: Changes in the Sky-Environment

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The main thesis to be explored is the undiscussed change in the sky-environment and the loss of sky-blue from our aesthetic reach. The concept of 'living blue-beauty' allows to introduce the dynamic sky-environment as a scientific subject and to use the findings to open an inter- and transdisciplinary dialogue on anthropogenic sensory pollution. The observation of increasing changes up to the possible absence of this beauty also enables to address aesthetic and atmospheric (in-)sensitivity and (co-)affection for fundamental environmental changes. In the context of an unprecedented epoch of the Anthropocene, concepts such as 'everyday' and 'familiarity' are being challenged. Furthermore, the sky-environment becomes revealed as vulnerable in its natural variability. On top of that, its threatened beauty justifies the pursuit of preventing its loss for the future. | *Keywords: Aesthetics, Philosophy of the Body, Phenomenology, Sensory Pollution, Beauty*

1. Introduction

This article aims to open a discussion on the observable changes in the sky-environment, from the possibility of increasing haziness to the persistent blurring of sky-blue that deviates from historical and seasonal dynamics. Due to the scope of the work, the concern about the loss of sky-blue to be raised here cannot encompass the pressing issues of rapid urban growth and the built environment in terms of an increasingly obstructed view of the sky. Rather, the starting place is that we still have the opportunity to perceive and experience current developments in the sky. However, an aesthetic assessment of deviation from natural environmental variability is still particularly difficult, as it must be addressed against the background of a new, human-made epoch. The beginning of the Anthropocene is unprecedented in its phenomena for which there are no aesthetic and experiential references yet. In view of a transition, it seems urgent to identify and anchor aesthetic experiences with the sky-blue environment as a baseline. The natural sciences, by contrast, have defined comparable references on the basis of the Holocene epoch, in which the Earth system was considered relatively stable and resilient and in which we

humans were able to settle. This reference range of the last ~10,000 years enables the assessment of current changes of the 'post-Holocene Earth,' which appears to be in transition to more instability and unpredictability (Richardson et al., 2023). What this includes is the sky-environment and, in addition to the necessary measurements and objectified assessments of it through the natural sciences, attention should be drawn to the necessary but missing integration of living knowledge through aesthetic experience with the sky-environment. This is not about placing these different approaches and knowledge systems into competition or a hierarchy, but to promote integration and constructive dialogue for the benefit of the sky-blue itself and for human's possibility of experiencing it. The statement of an *increasing loss of sky-blue* is therefore given as motivation for the needed discourse in aesthetics and beyond.

A starting question that arises is why aestheticians, who are considered practically and theoretically sensible not only to art but also to their environment, have not yet addressed the profound change of the sky-environment that is claimed here. In the context of the claim, a possible lack of aesthetic and 'atmospheric sensibility' (Thibaud, 2021) towards this post-Holocene environment could be thought of in two basic ways.

(1) Either the sky is part of aesthetic life and is experienced, but no significant changes are observed that deviate from the 'familiar' and are considered worthy of discussion.

(2) Or the sky is not observed and experienced, and deviant phenomena can therefore not be recognized and discussed.

The latter case poses the more obvious initial situation that there is no necessary experiential knowledge base about the actual sky for a critical discussion, even though it is an environment shared by all. Although it may be a controversial topic, the prerequisite for an aesthetic debate is missing as long as some past and recent states of the sky have not been perceived and can hence not be considered as known or updated. So, if I want to question the current visibility of sky-blue, there must first be given actualized experiences of sky-blue and/or the absence of sky-blue. This basic but seemingly difficult prerequisite of human environmental knowledge appears to be often unfulfilled in so-called everyday life.

The first case, is the even more difficult starting point for the debate because it is obscured by supposed sky viewers. When the sky is visible to humans, experiences of change that differ from past perceptions and recognize deviating change seem possible. But assumptions about supposed 'familiarity' with this environment may get in the way of really experiencing change, as well as forms of silent adaption to or acceptance of any change that are already captured in important concepts such as 'shifting baseline syndrome' (Pauly, 1995) and 'environmental amnesia' (Kahn, 2002). 'Shifting baseline syndrome', for example, used particularly in ecology, is generally described as a "gradual change in the accepted norms for the condition of the natural environment due to a lack of experience, memory,

and/or knowledge of its past conditions” (Soga and Gaston, 2018, p. 222). In terms of human responses to environmental changes like ‘shifting baseline syndrome’ and ‘environmental amnesia’, an obvious reason for the supposed sky viewer not perceiving and experiencing deviant changes may be related to essential differences in the qualities of human experience and what can be considered living aesthetic experience. Either way, both versions indicate a lack of aesthetic knowledge of the sky-environment, and in this respect the human capacity for a living aesthetic experience is called into question here. This highlights the need to re-examine what and how a living aesthetic experience is constituted, especially in the context of a changing sky-environment that exceeds natural variation.

Nonetheless, aesthetics as an account of aesthetic life serves here as an opening into this complex topic by enabling the conception of a ‘*living¹ sky-blue beauty*’ presented here as a means of better grasping and discussing contemporary changes in the sky-environment. Moreover, the philosophical questioning of the concept of ‘familiarity’ in connection with supposed knowledge of the everyday sky can also, according to one possible argument, be seen as a reason for a non-actualized and thus unreliable experience of it. Against this background, some essential differences between a shared sky-environment as an everyday ‘by-product’ and an aesthetic experience of the same will be identified. On the basis of the ‘*living sky-blue beauty*’, the experienced existence and appearance of the sky-blue can demonstrate the overcoming of the separation between the notions of ‘ordinary’ and ‘extraordinary’. More importantly, the ‘*living sky-blue beauty*’ that is intrinsically connected with its lived knowledge can help to address and communicate its changes and the possible increasing absence of sky-blue, for instance, due to problems of anthropogenic sensory pollution.²

2. Lost Reliability of a Sky-Blue Environment and the Problem of Familiarity

“I don’t have to have Faith. I have Experience.”
(Campbell, 1988, Ep. 6)

The recognition of everyday aesthetics and the aesthetic uncovering of once rather hidden and withdrawn entities and processes, from lichens and mushrooms to designed objects of the built environment such as wind turbines³ or shopping malls, could suggest an expansion of aesthetic sensibility and awareness. In the context of the environment, aesthetics can be understood with Arnold Berleant as a “theory of sensibility” that he described as a “perceptual awareness that is developed, focused, and informed” (Berleant, 2012, p. 55).

¹ ‘Living’ is chosen here instead of ‘lived’ because it implies both the past [lived] and the future and emphasizes the temporal continuum of this experience in its continuing activity.

² There are human impacts of sensory pollution across modalities such as light, noise, and chemical pollutions. E.g., Dominoni et al. (2020).

³ E.g., Saito, Y. (2004) *Machines in the Ocean: The Aesthetics of Wind Farms*; Gray, T-L. (2012) *Beauty or Bane: Advancing an Aesthetic Appreciation of Wind Turbine Farms*.

The awareness and appreciation of celestial events, however, seems to be ancient, and still today the sky can be understood as our closest environmental reference or involvement (Heidegger, 1962/2006, p. 413). In this sense, the sky tends to be seen as one of the last natural spaces. Its naturalness originates, for example, from the fundamental sun-dependent rhythms of darkness and light, whose complex meaning for humans, non-humans and ecological processes has only recently awakened new scientific interest in the light of precarious planetary health (Haines, 2021). On closer observation, however, the sky-environment is more than a self-evident naturalness anymore, as revealed, for example, by the increasingly dense air traffic and various perceivable ‘signs,’ be they indistinct clouds, stripes, strange light formations and persistent haziness (Larson et al, 2019; Baroutaji et al, 2019). In relation with air and atmospheric pollution, which ultimately affect the integrity of the biosphere, the increase in anthropogenic aerosol loading should be taken into consideration, which is defined as one of the nine planetary boundaries (Rockström et al., 2009) that is very likely to be exceeded in some regions (Richardson et al., 2023).

Drawing attention to the loss of a sky-blue environment is a particular challenge since the sky is a shared everyday presence and yet it is ever-changing. The concept of ‘familiarity’ in everyday aesthetics appears paradigmatic here for such an everyday event that *was*, *is* and probably always *will* be above our heads. However, the assumption or belief that the sky will continue its ‘familiar’ range of appearances, including sky-blue, in the future is now questionable. The relatively reliable Holocene can refer to the *natural reliability* in certain patterns, dynamics and appearances of natural phenomena, which we are beginning to leave behind us. In other words, if natural reliability is an important precondition for what might be called ‘familiar’ experience, it seems worth asking whether one can still ‘rely’ on a blue sky-environment in the approaching Anthropocene. Already Soga and Gaston (2018, p. 223), in the context of the above-mentioned ‘shifting baseline syndrome’, name the “lack of familiarity with the natural environment” as a major cause of ‘shifting baseline syndrome’. Can the human-sky relationship then still be considered a “kind of experience that is all-too-familiar to most of us” (Saito, 2007, p. 51)? Part of the aim of everyday aesthetics, according to Saito, is to “illuminate the ordinary neglected, but gemlike aesthetic potentials hidden behind trivial, mundane, and commonplace facades” (*Ibid.*). Furthermore, she says, it is important to “nurturing this awareness of the neglected, but familiar” (*Ibid.*). Consequently, she presents sky art as a seemingly necessary means for the possibility of an experience of the sky with a subsequent or accompanying appreciation (Saito, 2011). But when the everyday, like the sky-environment, is measured by what ‘stands out’ and what is not ‘normal,’ it suggests that the everyday needs protection or elicitation, for example by first being classified and then experienced as *gems*. If this is meant as a legitimate critique of our neglected aesthetic awareness of the everyday it does not change the fact that the everyday realm becomes devalued because it is still measured with the attention towards the arts or the so-called ‘extraordinary.’ The sky discovered as ‘gem,’ also intending to equate it with art

and thus integrating it into its sphere, nevertheless treats this realm as 'superior.' According to such an approach of everyday aesthetics, the extraordinary is conceived as the antithesis of the ordinary, and as a result the two cannot exist together. More importantly, one does not do justice to the experience of the so-called everyday – like the sky-environment – because one also denies the possibility of (experientially) transgressing and leaving behind cultural products. We will see below that this is possible and that an aesthetic experience of the sky-blue beauty allows us to overcome the limiting alternative of natural *and/or* cultural aesthetic experience.

But first the question remains whether something like the sky-blue can be neglected and still be familiar, as Saito suggests. As discussed, the notion of 'familiarity' has been scrutinized concerning the problem of a nowadays questionable *natural reliability* within *natural variability* such as of the sky-environment. Yet what can elucidate a supposed 'neglect' of the sky? Time seems to be essential here for the experiential context, because whatever the proposition 'the sky is blue' is based on, whether it was learned or experienced, it probably comes from a past. How far back this experienced past goes seems crucial for a dynamic environment like the sky. Especially if the everyday sky is assumed to be 'neglected,' which is why familiarity with its appearance can easily be deemed outdated.

Nevertheless, colour philosopher John Campbell says that we can share aesthetic experiences of colour, which for him in the case of blue would describe a relationship to an external blue in which we stand, in such a way that colour is understood as "an indispensable element in our imaginative understanding of one another" (Campbell, 2021, p. 410). Importantly, such a *shared blueness* still means that your "imaginative understanding" of it "depends on your knowledge of the shared environment," so it still requires first knowing a colour in the environment, like sky-blue (Campbell, 2021, p. 418). This does not answer the question of how up-to-date the experience of such a dynamic environment must be in order to 'know' it, for example, in terms of its colour or anthropogenic changes. More easily this might be the case with cultural artifacts such as human-made colours, for example, the famous *International Klein Blue*. The aim of the creation of *International Klein Blue* was to make the properties of a blue stable and obtain an unchanging color value and intensity (Gopnik, 2010). Of course, the perception of *International Klein Blue* can also change due to external conditions such as various light exposures and other contexts. Decay and aging are also real processes to which human artifacts are subject, although they might occur more slowly than natural decay and change. The sky, in other words, is special in that it is a very everyday environment, suggesting that humans are familiar with it while it is constantly changing, making it even more difficult to recognize any changes beyond the natural variability. However, in order to be able to further discuss a changing sky and the possible loss of sky-blue, the necessary prerequisite of an aesthetic experience and thus a lived and actualized knowledge with the sky must be given.

3. The Missing Central Link of the Everyday Body

“If the Doors of Perception were cleansed [and open] then everything would be seen as it is.” (Jarman, 2019, p. 89)

Although in Campbell’s philosophy of colour, as we have seen, there was the precondition that one must first know one’s environment, there was no distinction of the quality or mode of such experience, but he understood experience generally as a relationship in which one stands (Campbell, 2021). For example, the sky can be co-experienced as a kind of by-product when unpacking the car, perhaps even felt in its vastness above our heads. Here it is not clear whether for Campbell this would already mean ‘standing in a relationship,’ but in our context it is not considered an aesthetic experience. In no way does this mean that aesthetic experiences cannot be lived every day. On the contrary, aesthetic being is not only an essential part of life, aesthetics is life, like Katya Mandoki discusses that “beauty is not the cause but the consequence of evolution” (Mandoki, 2015, p. 32).

Nevertheless, a living aesthetic experience of sky-blue requires the participation of the human body, which will now be examined as the *missing central link*. The participation of the body disputed here concerns an imbalance in the interplay between the activity and openness of the organic-biological body and the *Leib*⁴ with its affective dimension. The latter, he also referred to as phenomenal body, can transgress the physical boundaries towards the sky. Phenomenological research introduced this analytical separation of the human body for scientific observation and description, not to create a new artificial separation within the human being and thus establish a body-body problem (Thompson, 2007, p. 235). An attempt can instead be made to approach the complexity of the human body, which is in biochemical exchange with an environment as well as in a living and feeling exchange with the world. In respect to the *Leib*, Heidegger reminds us, for example, in his last seminars and conversations with the psychiatrist Medard Boss, that the *Leib*-dimension is the most difficult⁵ and *Leib*-phenomenology is still outstanding (Heidegger, 1987/2021, p. 292). In this sense, it should be noted that the integrative consideration of the *Leib* goes beyond the mere mention of the first-person perspective and should be elaborated in more detail in the course of this work. Later, Varela et al. (1991/2016, p. 233) understandably criticized the fact that also body philosophers get stuck in theory and wrote, relevant to this work, that “one needs to be embodied to attain realization.” The living aesthetic experience as the possible embodiment of a sky-blue beauty then also means the participation of both

⁴ The old German term *Leib*, for which “lived body” is often used, is avoided here as temporally insufficient. As stated in the note on “living” blue-beauty, the temporal continuum of past, present and future shall be emphasized [see footnote 1]. As an alternative to *Leib*, ‘phenomenal body’ is used.

⁵ “[...] daß das Leibliche das Schwierigste ist und das ich damals eben noch nicht mehr zu sagen wußte.” (Heidegger, 1987/2021, p. 292)

interacting and codependent bodily dimensions and not the neglect of the organic-biological aspects that phenomenology often advocates. To the best of my knowledge, this bodily encompassing cooperation has not yet been seriously considered from a phenomenological point of view and could enlighten us about so far missed body-knowledge of the human being itself as well as with the [sky-]environment. For example, material seeing, such as the sky-blue spaciousness, can co-influence *leibliche* experience, create feelings, affective processes and even actions. Here, the possibility of aesthetic experience can unfold as boundlessness in the deep and wide, spotless sky-blue, all the way to contemplation in *sensual metaphysics*. Goethe famously wrote in his *Theory of Colours* (1810/1948) that “we love to contemplate blue, not because it advances to us, but because it draws us after it,”⁶ what also alludes to the penetrating and “almost inexpressible effect” (Goethe, 1810/1948, p. 779) of the expansive sky-blue. The blue of the sky can draw us into its spaciousness, appear limitless and expand us on a bodily, mental and spiritual level. Moreover, the sky-blue is then also experienceable and thus understandable as “an energy” (*Ibid.*)⁷ that corresponds to the dynamics of a natural element that can transmit its power to the experiencer. As a result, this living experience of a changing power and effect of nature, which accompanies the living and thus bodily understanding of the sky-environment, enables us to grasp the changing sky-environment in its vulnerability. Ideally, it could help to promote the preservation of this beauty for the future. Due to the scope of the article, it is not possible here to expand on related discourses on empathy and intersubjectivity (e.g., Zahavi, 2009) that would assist in better conceptualizing such *lived vulnerability* of the [sky-] environment.

Another possible bodily-active and thus living experience, by contrast, would be the aesthetic disappearance of the wide blue sky-environment, which can carry feelings of loss, such as the loss of freedom. Concerning freedom in relation to the concept of the ‘everyday’ discussed earlier, Varela et al. have written something very essential that is worth quoting in full:

Freedom is not the same as living in the everyday world conditioned by ignorance and confusion; it is living and acting in the everyday world with realization. Freedom does not mean escape from the world; it means transformation of our entire way of being, our mode of embodiment, within the lived world itself (Varela, 1991/2016, p. 234).

To further pursue the living aesthetic experience of the sky-environment as a prerequisite for the intended discussion, including the missing central link of the interplay of the human body, the focus will now be on *sky-blue beauty* and some related requirements.

⁶ “So sehen wir das Blaue gern an, nicht weil es auf uns dringt, sondern weil es uns nach sich zieht” (Goethe, 1810/1948, p. 781).

⁷ “Sie[blau] ist als Farbe eine Energie” (Goethe, 1810/1948, p. 779).

4. Atmospheric Life and Sky-Blue Beauty

“Blue transcends the solemn geography of human limits.” (Jarman, 2019, p. 86)

Starting from the sky as a by-product in the flow of everyday experience, such as unpacking the car parked under the sky, the bodily sense organs are at work like the eyes, which may glimpse the sky, but a living aesthetic experience of seems not really constituted in such otherwise goal-oriented scene. For such an everyday scene, it is generally assumed that the time required for an attentive gaze and the body involved to experience the world such as the sky would take too long compared to merely reflexive reactions and information reception from the close environment (Deisseroth, 2021, p. 67). Assuming that a living aesthetic experience of the sky-environment requires awareness,⁸ aesthetic attention,⁹ or mindfulness it might seem like an investment of time to experience the sky, which follows the popular argument of too little time in everyday life. However, it can also be seen not as measurable investment following the excess of counting, but as a way or quality of living that is always present in the way of possible being. I am deliberately not saying that one must first *choose* this present way of being and *engage* with the sky-environment – because that would again falsely suggest distinct steps that take time. It does not have to be chosen first, but lived.

It brings us back to the missing central link in the aesthetic experience of the sky-blue-beauty and the multi-layered bodily openness that resonates with it. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone provides an interesting comparison of the child’s whole-body experience to that of an adult, asking: “how is it that adult humans commonly lose not sight but the *felt bodily sense* of their full-body affectivity?” (Sheets-Johnstone, 2016, p. 77) It is important to capture this bodily felt sense here as a whole-body experience that might be missing in adulthood. It also means that a missing felt sense of the body or body awareness is more than the absence of individual or different emotions, but refers to the possible bodily distribution range of affects and emotions. According to Eugene Gendlin, emotions tend to be clearer than the more encompassing *felt sense* he focuses on, which is larger than emotions but includes them (Gendlin, 1981/2007, p. 40). A missing felt sense of the body thus prevents the whole-body experience, which partly coincides with the missing link argued here. A prevented, blocked, or insufficient experience of the sky, to call it ‘aesthetic,’ concerns the body in its wholeness. For example, due to a lack of concrete *organic openness*, the sky-blue carried by the *Leib*, like a *sky-blue feeling*, cannot enter and spread. Also, a felt sense of a living experience never arises in the first place. In this regard, there is a striking connection to ‘spatial medicine’ that can help to demonstrate this entangled connection and inevitable interplay between phenomenal body and biological body that are

⁸ E.g., See Berleant (2015, p. 5) debatable degrees of intensity up to “fully acute awareness.”

⁹ E.g., See Bence’s (2016) claim on the centrality of aesthetic attention for understanding aesthetic experience.

part of ‘full-body affectivity.’ Spatial medicine, a branch of body therapy, focuses on concretely creating more space in the human body itself, for example, by treating living tissue and fasciae (Marfin-Martin et al, 2015). By expanding the interior body space and opening up the physical body, restrictive tensions that could be dominant today due to chronic stress are released. Now, the physical body is more open and attentive to interaction and especially to communication with the phenomenal body like for a whole-body experience of sky-blue. It is this co-openness of body that is manifested in a co-dependent relationship with the world and the environment. We find here a living synthesis of phenomenology and biology in aesthetic experience, in which openness becomes a multifaceted bodily prerequisite for a living aesthetic access and experience of sky-blue as an *felt beauty*. If this state of the body in its multidimensional openness is not given, it is possible that there are *inner-bodily imbalances* and compressions that rather do not allow an open interaction with the world and the environment while nourishing the assumption of a missing bodily link for living aesthetic experience. This is in allusion to so-called ‘attentional imbalances’ identified by contemplative science, which shows attention as so scattered and distracted that there is little to no (bodily) space for aesthetic attention (Wallace, 2007, p. 7).

However, the phenomenal body, which Merleau-Ponty called the “vehicle of being in the world” (2012, p. 537), can nevertheless exceed the organic body and extend to the sky. For example, the body can move in emotions (*e-movere*).¹⁰ Merleau-Ponty writes concerning the experience of the sky-blue:

If I wish to enclose myself entirely into my eyes and abandon myself to the blue of the sky, soon I am no longer aware of gazing and, at just the moment I wanted to give myself over to vision entirely, the sky ceases to be a ‘visual perception’ in order to become my current world. (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 234/271)

Here we reminded of the above-mentioned adjustment of the eyes, which must first reach the sky and are also consciously adjusted to it until we reach an unified¹¹ moment of experience over time as essential part of the process of aesthetic experience of the sky. Here, in synch with the sky-blue, human beings can experience a *primordial balance* or coherence between inner and outer states in contrast to the preventing ‘attentional imbalances.’ Moreover, feelings of unbounded interiority in a continuum with sky-blue can emerge and the blue sky can become ‘my current world.’ It is important to emphasize, that perceiving, experiencing, and understanding occur simultaneously in such moments, which is where the experience of beauty of the sky can happen. To experience the sky-blue in the present moment as beauty means to experience oneself integrated in this beauty, in a living aesthetic experience with beauty. It is a synchronized experience with the sky-blue through an openness to [natural] beauty by being in beauty. Fortunately, it is ‘as easy as breathing’ to feel and embody the beauty of the sky-blue when one is in the living body and

¹⁰ E.g., See Sheets-Johnston (2016, pp. 1–17; pp. 254–264) extensive inquiry on movement.

¹¹ The feeling of unity is something different from a theoretical discussion about unity that happens “within this metaphysical point that is the thinking subject” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 242).

being the body. In this living way of experiencing, we can feel the sky-blue beauty and realize the sky-environment as *vulnerable* in a bodily way by understanding it as *atmospheric life*. It is essential to the living and the conceptualizing of a holistic moment in a continuum or process of aesthetic experience that despite its stimulated complex interplay of the human body we are momentary present in its unity. This alludes to what Merleau-Ponty (2012, p. 249) discussed as temporality of the body – where “body takes possession of time and makes a past and a future exist for a present.” By being in the body, we are here and present, and this includes freedom from stress and ‘rumination’ (Whitmer and Gotlib, 2013), the distraction through the daily talk of the mind that rather inhibits such moments of human-world balance in beauty.

However, *living sky-blue beauty* happens before rational attribution and is therefore not yet determined and expressed in the linguistic term ‘beauty,’ which I leave to the discussion of aesthetic judgements of taste. The point is rather to re-evoked a *living beauty with the sky*, from which the necessary aesthetic attention and deep sensing can emanate, initiating concerns regarding its changeability and vulnerability. Living blue-beauty carries additional meaning as *lived knowledge* which is not reached by thinking, but by seeing and experiencing. In this context, Ted Toadvine’s *ecological aesthetics* should be cited: “The aesthetic significance of a part of nature depends on the elements revealed” by the perceiver “but these elements are still features of nature not subjective projections” (Toadvine, 2010, p. 89). Today, this can also affect features of nature that have been altered by anthropogenic sensory pollutants. Here it becomes a particular challenge for aesthetic skills and environmental sensibility to distinguish between natural and anthropogenic changes of the sky. Significant here is Berleant’s determination of the environmental sensibility as ‘educated sensation’ and furthermore important in this context: “It requires the perceptual knowledge and skills that we are continually enhancing in and through our encounters and activities” (Berleant, 2012, p. 55). Just to mention that the embodied mind and the cognitive as well as intellectual capacities are understood as originating from the human body, and that they are not excluded in the process of aesthetic experience and in the processing of *living sky-blue beauty* and the *lived knowledge* contained in it.

Nevertheless, lived beauty as well as other forms of lived knowledge with the sky include relevant insight about this environment that can contribute to Dryzak’s call for the cultivation of ‘*ecosystemic reflexivity*.’ When he writes to “listening more effectively to an active Earth System, [...] to seek, receive and respond to early warnings about potential ecological state shifts” (Dryzek, 2016, p. 953), this must also include the sky-environment and its anthropogenic changes. Furthermore, *beauty*, understood here as lived aesthetic capability of the human being, challenges the aesthetic, and therefore also the bodily, condition of the human being and asks: How open are you to your environment above you? What do you know about it (from your experience with it)?

5. Summary and Future Considerations

Still, one might respond here, why is this concern about the sky-environment necessary at all, everything is changing and we are living in a human-made era where almost nothing is 'natural' anymore. But then again, we have already shown how we nevertheless presuppose naturalness when we rely on the sky in its blueness and existence as described above.

The predominant theme of this study was to draw attention on the changes within the sky-environment and the tendency towards the loss of sky-blue. Familiarity with the assumption that the sky is blue has proven to be untenable in the dawning Anthropocene. The aim was not to provide pre-determined aesthetic descriptions of new phenomena and appearances, but to encourage aesthetes and aestheticians to have their own living experiences and to look up to the sky again.

The concept of *living blue-beauty* was introduced as countermeasure that allows the close sky-environment to be perceived and experienced in an intimate way and to reawaken aesthetic awareness and atmospheric sensibility. Through the bodily experience, the potential vulnerability of atmospheric life could be understood. Based on the accompanying lived understanding of the sky-environment transformative discussions and actions in the context of change of a new epoch are initiated. Focusing on such complex subject required a multi-dimensional approach, which, however, did not allow the *living blue-beauty* to be captured as comprehensively as possible. One direction that has only been touched here in relation to the human body is how such living understanding of the sky-environment differs from merely hearing or reading *sky-news* (such as weather reports etc.). Other issues that could not be sufficiently discussed are clouds in general and in particular in relation to the monochrome blue, as well as a new indistinctness of cloud formations. Another undiscussed and understudied problem is the indirect impact on the visible sky. It would be important here to consider the increasing traffic in [outer]space, which is filling up with space debris and is known as the Kessler syndrome (Mark and Kamath, 2019). Furthermore, the cultivation of deep and atmospheric sensing in respect to borderless dimension of the blue sky-environment can be investigated together with the important concept of mindfulness that correlates with attention or its absence. Here affective sciences come in, where other cultures should be involved, asking how people experience, perceive, and understand the sky-environment? The objective could be a global aesthetic picture of the post-Holocene sky-environment allowing prediction and prevention of uncontrollable consequences as demonstrated, particularly fragile environment.

Finally, aesthetes and aestheticians should therefore intensify the investigation of anthropogenic sensory pollution, as an increasing main issue of our time, and address it more radically. Aesthetics can therefore play a role of a central 'change agent' of necessary societal transformation, in which aesthetic capabilities are required to access, perceive, experience, alternatively understand and possibly prevent changing environments. Especially, for a clean sky-environment itself and for the prevention of a continuously blurred and diminished experience of the natural beauty of the blue sky.

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