As Kant's description indicates, pleasure in the sublime, unlike pleasure in the beautiful, involves a 'negative moment', a feeling of being overwhelmed or threatened. Yet through our removal from immediate danger, the overwhelming or threatening aspects of the object become elements in a pleasing experience, one typically described in terms of awe or rapture. In its classical form, as described by Kant, Edmund Burke, and other eighteenth-century theorists, the sublime has always been associated primarily with wilderness. Given that practical considerations mandate the removal of dangerous elements from the built environment, the sublime must be sought beyond its confines. Manicured parks, colorful songbirds, and even bustling city squares may be beautiful, but they cannot be sublime in the classical sense.

Even beauty, which is generally not taken to depend on any quality unique to either environment, has seemed to lead toward a distinction between them. For example, one influential way of understanding beauty is that offered by Formalists, who understand aesthetic experience in terms of a certain property of objects called 'Form'. As Clive Bell explains: "Lines and colors combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of form, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colors, these aesthetically moving forms, I call 'Significant Form'" (Bell, 1913).[6] Accounts of aesthetic appreciation focusing on Form urge the appreciator to attend to, and take pleasure in, the particular arrangements of shapes, lines and patterns in an object. On this conception of the aesthetic, a distinction once more arises between the aesthetic character of the natural and built environments, given that these environments consist of quite dissimilar forms. It is true that there are resemblances: a skyscraper may loom above a commercial street as a mountain looms over a forest, for example (Berleant, 2005, 42–43). Architects have sometimes taken inspiration from natural forms and explicitly tried to mimic them. However, these instances are by and large exceptions, and generally, the resemblances between natural and built form remain weak. An obvious example of the pervasive and fundamental variance between them is the humble right angle, a form ubiquitous in the built environment but virtually non-existent in nature (Vogel, 1998).

As mentioned, these aesthetic considerations are but one facet of a broader view of the relationship between the wild and built environments, a view on which, in the words of Holmes Rolston, "civilization is the 'antithesis' of wilderness" (Rolston, 1991). However, recently there has been a move to re-evaluate this view. This movement has been driven by theoretical concerns regarding the viability of the traditional wilderness/built-environment distinction, as well as a growing awareness of the extent to which our conceptions of wilderness have been shaped by, and used to defend, various political views (Cronon, 1995). As well, Andrew Light has argued that there is a more practical motivation for re-evaluating this distinction: whatever its faults may be, humans are not abandoning the urban

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[6] On Formalism as a general view of the aesthetic, see Carroll (2001). Note that some theorists include color in the concept of form as well (Zangwill, 1999).

environment. Rather, they are embracing it (Light, 2001). This means that, increasingly, the health of our overall environment will be determined by the character of cities. Consequently, any view that treats the built environment as an 'unnatural', and therefore unredeemable, place is unlikely to be helpful in addressing environmental concerns.

Although aesthetic concerns are not often accorded much weight in environmental discussions, I believe that the aesthetic dichotomy between the wild and built environments is particularly salient in regard to Light's concerns, because aesthetic preferences seem to be relevant factors in the determination of patterns of land and transportation use. In the Greater Toronto Area, where I live, the current population of five million is projected to increase by over three million in the next twenty-five years.[7] For environmental reasons, it is desirable to concentrate new residents within existing city boundaries, reducing their need for automobile use. This goal, however, is somewhat in tension with the lingering notion that residents of the city are 'trapped' in an 'unnatural' environment, and that true aesthetic appeal lies in more 'natural' areas somewhere beyond the pale of the built environment. More importantly, at the theoretical level, there is room to doubt whether the aesthetic character of nature and that of the built environment are as antithetical as has been believed. To pursue this idea, I need to briefly describe an alternative way of thinking about the aesthetic.

2   Knowledge, Order, and Aesthetic Appreciation

As mentioned, if one regards the aesthetic character of an environment solely in terms of form (i.e., shapes, patterns, and so forth) then nature and the built environment have little in common aesthetically. However, most current approaches to the aesthetic regard such formal elements as only one aspect of an object's aesthetic character. In addition, background knowledge about the object is thought to play a critical role. To illustrate this approach, it will be useful to discuss first the aesthetic appreciation of artworks. I will then discuss its application to environments, and explain how it opens up the possibility of an aesthetic character that is shared by both natural and built environments.

One well-known version of the view that background knowledge regarding an artwork is an essential element in determining its aesthetic character is due to Kendall Walton (1970).[8] His approach can be summarized as the view that possessing certain forms of knowledge about an object allows us to see a certain *order* in the perceptual qualities of the artwork, thereby affecting its aesthetic character.

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[7] *GTA Population and Employment Projections to 2031*, Toronto Urban Development Services, June 2000; URL=www.city.toronto.on.ca/business_publications/gta_2031.pdf

[8] Related views on the role of background knowledge in the appreciation of art may be found in Dickie (1974) and Danto (1981).