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The Aesthetic Significance of Nature's Otherness¹

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ABSTRACT

In this article I consider and reflect upon the aesthetic significance of Simon Hailwood's conception of nature as articulated in an earlier volume of this journal in his paper 'The Value of Nature's Otherness' (Hailwood 2000: 353–72). I provide a brief elucidation of Hailwood's conception of nature as other and I maintain that recognition of the value of nature's otherness and respect for nature's otherness requires as a necessary condition that one know and perceive that nature is other. I then go on to consider Hailwood's concerns over the possibility of locating nature's value as other in aesthetic responses to nature. I argue that such reservations are warranted insofar as they focus on an inadequate 'subjectivist' account of aesthetic experience but are not warranted for all accounts of aesthetic experience, in particular, I will argue that such reservations do not apply to the 'cognitive' model of aesthetic appreciation proposed by Allen Carlson as the 'environmental model' and developed in the work of Yuriko Saito. I conclude this paper by claiming that aesthetic value is a necessary component of otherness as a ground of nature's value and that this needs to be conceded if we are to be able to acknowledge the reality of something other than ourselves, to treat it appropriately and with respect.

KEYWORDS

Environmental aesthetics, environmental ethics, value, Otherness.

I

What does it mean to say that nature is other? Hailwood's conception of nature as other emphasises the independence of nature, its autonomy, and its indifference towards humanity. It is characterised in terms of its absence of human design and its indifference to human requirements, needs and interests. This

conception of nature encompasses both biotic and abiotic nature and includes non-human creatures and their activities, natural forces, natural entities, processes and properties. Whilst Hailwood does not deny that this conception of nature is compatible with 'physical or biological continuities implicit in evolutionary theory ... or the existence of 'ecological communities' of causally interdependent parts' (Hailwood 2000: 354), he is at pains to insist that these ecological communities do *not* constitute ethical or moral communities in the manner Aldo Leopold suggests in *The Land Ethic* (Leopold 1968: 201–26). The affinities that span the organic and inorganic realms, are not ethical or moral affinities and should not be considered as such (Hailwood 2000: 361). Hailwood explicitly states in his paper that he is not attempting to prove that nature is other but to show that *if* nature is valued in virtue of its otherness then such value will be non-anthropocentric, non-instrumental and extrinsic (Hailwood 2000: 353). If we are to value nature in virtue of its otherness then nature's value as other will be distinct from our own. If we are to respect nature's otherness we will be required to recognise that it is amoral and consequently 'provides no determinate blueprint from which we can read off ways of life or moral principles' (Hailwood 2000: 357). If we are to interact appropriately with nature as other then we will acknowledge that it is indifferent to human requirements, needs and interests and will not consider it as simply 'given' for our purposes. If nature's otherness is understood to be a source of nature's value then nature will be owed respect in virtue of its otherness. This attitude towards nature is captured by John Passmore who tells us that 'if we can bring ourselves fully to admit the independence of nature, the fact that things go on in their own complex ways, we are more likely to feel respect for the ways in which they go on' (Passmore 1995: 141).

Valuing nature as other 'involves valuing independent nature for its own sake' (Hailwood 2000: 359). Valuing nature in virtue of its otherness means that we acknowledge nature's autonomy and its lack of teleology; we will acknowledge that it functions independently of humanity and without reference to human purposes and goals. Consequently, this conception of nature is opposed to holistic philosophies and their common sense predecessors and analogues, which are prone to deny (or at the very least overlook) the distinctness of nature. Examples cited by Hailwood are deep ecology, communitarian holism and metaphysical holism. Other examples might include pantheism, varieties of modern paganism and 'ethical offshoots' of the Gaia hypothesis. Exponents of such views have a tendency to overlook the extent of the divisions and differences that exist between humanity and nature in order to stress the continuity, kinship, unity or identity of humanity with nature, in doing so they often project human structures and sentiments onto the universe, moulding nature in their image. Such conceptions of nature are likely to be in tension if not incompatible with a conception of nature as other.

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It may be instructive to ask what sort of value nature as other confers, in order to determine what *is* compatible with respect for nature's otherness. According to Hailwood, if nature is valued in virtue of its otherness this value will be non-anthropocentric, non-instrumental and extrinsic in the senses of terms that Hailwood employs in his article. To say that the value is non-anthropocentric is to say that it is not tied to prudential concerns and is not contingent upon idiosyncratic human attitudes or sentiments. To say that the value is non-instrumental is to say that respect for nature's otherness requires that one value nature for its own sake and not as a means to an end. Finally, to say that the value of nature as other is extrinsic is to acknowledge that the concept of nature as other is a relational one and presupposes our own existence. The value is extrinsic because the value of nature as other will be a value conferred in virtue of a relation holding between human beings and nature (Hailwood 2000: 357–8, 363–4).

Hailwood maintains that 'all human beings are confronted by nature as other whether or not they recognize it' (Hailwood 2000: 368). If we do recognise it as other, nature will be owed respect in virtue of its otherness. Such respect will require that we respect nature 'as it is, independently of significances attributed within local landscapes' (Hailwood 2000: 356). It should be noted that respect for nature's otherness requires, as a necessary condition, that one know and perceive that nature is other. The 'otherness' view is one that can be named and described in the abstract (to know that nature is other) but to see from such a vantage point requires that one actually inhabit that perspective or stance (to perceive that nature is other) as Hailwood acknowledges 'the otherness view presupposes faith in our cognitive *and* perceptual capacities' (Hailwood 2004: 20), that is, knowledge of nature as other needs to be coupled with acquaintance if we are to be able to respect nature as other appropriately. In addition to this, talk of respecting something 'for its own sake' requires that we have some conception of what that sake is in order to enable us to distinguish respect from disrespect. Hailwood's conception of nature as other allows for this since it does not require that we perceive nature to be unknowable, mysterious or strange. Nature as other need not be nature that is alien or inaccessible to our understanding. Hailwood acknowledges the contribution knowledge of nature as other may make to our respect for it when he tells us that 'nature becomes less strange as natural science progresses. This is important for predicting the consequences of human activity, which in turn is necessary for actively respecting independent nature' (Hailwood 2000: 354). However, although Hailwood acknowledges that nature's otherness is not compromised by knowledge or information about nature emerging from a cognitive-scientific framework, he errs in not emphasising the important contribution this knowledge makes to filling out our conception of nature as other. If we will be able to respect nature more effectively and appreciate it with a greater depth of understanding when we learn about its independent origins, processes and functions and its capacity for self-renewal and if recognising nature's otherness requires that we appreciate

it for what it is in light of our knowledge of what it is, then Hailwood should have devoted more space in his article to explaining how such knowledge can permeate, modify, enhance or inform our perception of nature as other. One can concur with Hailwood in maintaining that nature does not offer us a blueprint from which we can read off ways of life or moral principles whilst maintaining that he should have considered in more depth the suggestion of Patricia Matthews and Allen Carlson that we can, to some degree, read nature through the environmental and natural sciences; biology, geology, ecology, meteorology and natural history (Matthews 2001: 404–5, Carlson 1981: 15–27). Indeed, without such knowledge it is difficult to see how we could come to respect or appreciate nature in an appropriate fashion.

To respect nature as other it is necessary to perceive nature as other and know that nature is other but a further necessary condition is that we know that what we perceive to be nature is nature and not something which looks natural but isn't. Robert Elliot indicates in his article *Faking Nature* that knowledge of the origin or genesis of that which appears to us can alter our perception of it, changing what we see (Elliot 1995: 76–89). If our perception of nature as other is to be appropriate it will be grounded in the fact that what we see is, in fact, natural. Thus, our valuation of nature as other will have to be informed by the origins and genesis of what we perceive since 'what has value is the object that is of the kind I value, not merely objects which I think are of that kind' (Elliot 1995: 84).

In this Section I hope to have shown that nature as other allows us great liberty in the ways in which we choose to approach it, some of these will be appropriate and others will be inappropriate. Consequently, respect for nature's value as other will require that we approach it in an appropriate way and discovering what counts as appropriate will require recourse to knowledge provided by the natural sciences.

II

'Education, I fear, is learning to see one thing by going blind to another' (Leopold 1968: 158)

The sentiment expressed above by Aldo Leopold is indicative of the fact that knowledge of nature needs to be supplemented with appropriate perception of nature. To respect nature as other it is not enough to know that nature is other, but to perceive and experience nature as other. It has been suggested by Elliot, as a consequence of this, that in order to perceive nature as other one needs to appreciate nature's aesthetic value (Elliot 1994: 31–43). The aesthetic value of nature is thought by Elliot to be inextricably bound up with the value of nature as other. However, Hailwood raises a number of concerns over Elliot's suggestion

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that we locate nature's value as other in aesthetic responses to nature. Firstly, in focusing on aesthetic response as a necessary accompaniment to otherness as a ground of nature's value Hailwood claims that we will render that value excessively anthropocentric and contingent upon idiosyncratic human attitudes and sentiments. Secondly, the aesthetic responses in question are deemed by Elliot to alleviate or quell our fear of nature, but as Hailwood observes the natural and environmental sciences may also quell this fear. Consequently, on pain of inconsistency Elliot needs to maintain that aesthetic and scientific value are both necessary accompaniments to otherness as a ground of nature's value. The problem with this is that in both the case of aesthetic response and of scientifically informed response, nature will have only instrumental value. It will be valuable not for its own sake but only in so far as it evokes certain responses in us, in Elliot's case, responses which lead to a subsidence of our fears. Thirdly, insofar as Elliot's account presumes that fear of nature's otherness is incompatible with recognition of its aesthetic value, he seems to overlook the aesthetic category of the sublime in which fear of nature's otherness *is* compatible with recognition of its aesthetic value (Hailwood 2000: 355–6). Finally, insofar as aesthetic responses of the kind Elliot cites confer value on nature, such value will not be inextricably bound up with the value of nature as other as Elliot suggests, since the value of nature as other is best thought of as non-anthropocentric and non-instrumental.

It should be noted that Hailwood's concerns over the possibility of locating nature's value as other in aesthetic responses to nature are warranted only insofar as Hailwood operates with an inadequate 'subjectivist' account of aesthetic experience. This account is inadequate because it overlooks the fact that we can have coarser or more refined aesthetic sensibilities, based on and informed by external criteria and inter-subjective standards. Hailwood overlooks the aesthetic significance of natural otherness as a consequence of the fact that he considers aesthetics to be problematically subjective. It should be noted that the polarisation of aesthetic appreciation as too neatly 'subjective' or 'objective' overlooks the subtleties and nuances in the literature on aesthetics and is not borne out in aesthetic experience. However, for the purposes of addressing Hailwood's concern, I will counter his claim with the argument that there are aesthetic theories whose 'objectivity' makes them at home with the otherness view. Inevitably this means that the subjective/objective divide will receive an emphasis that does not accurately reflect the complexities of aesthetic experience.

Hailwood's arguments in Section VII of his article are directed at 'subjectivist' environmental philosophers but given his 'subjectivist' understanding of aesthetics one can plausibly argue that the former will apply equally to any account of the value of nature as other which involves an aesthetic component. According to the conception of aesthetics which Hailwood operates with, any account of the value of nature as other which involves an aesthetic component will render that value wholly contingent upon subjective attitudes, preferences

and feelings, it will render it wholly 'contingent on what our subjective feelings happen to be' (Hailwood 2000: 364). Clearly if this were the case, in positing an aesthetic component to nature's value as other one would be grounding the value of nature on subjective and idiosyncratic whims leaving that value vulnerable and fragile. Hailwood considers the reply that these responses will not be wholly arbitrary, but relative to and judged in light of what is perceived by 'normal' observers, he points out that this 'solution' only raises a further difficulty. If we grant that a shared locus of preferences and/or attitudes can exist, this will make the value of nature as other contingent upon the responses of a majority of 'normal' agents. His fear is that when the majority fail to perceive value that a minority *does* perceive, the value judgements of the minority would be discounted and those of the majority would prevail. In such a case we would have to say that there was no value present. The only way this outcome can be avoided is if the subjectivist posits particular sentiments or sensibilities insensitive to cultural variations and prejudices, as brute components of human nature. Hailwood dismisses this suggestion on account of its implausibility, indicating that in the case of aesthetic sensibilities it will be even more so.

It is for the above reasons that Hailwood thinks that nature's value as other is best thought of as an objective good. Accounts which attempt to ground nature's value as other in more objective responses are to be preferred over those which ground its value on the contingency of subjective responses. In the case of natural otherness, Hailwood maintains that the objectivity in question is best thought of as a 'method of understanding' in Thomas Nagel's sense. As a method of understanding it involves stepping back from an initial viewpoint to occupy a more detached perspective. Objectivity and subjectivity are best thought of as matters of degree. One widens one's horizons by taking in the original perspective and its relation to the world so that the original view is 'relegated to "subjective appearance", confirmable and correctable from the new more objective outlook' (Hailwood 2000: 364–7). Perspectives will be more objective the more they tend to shed the contingencies of the self. Examples of such contingencies in the case of natural otherness will include an individual's make-up and position in the world, their culture, religion, political ideals and character. However, since on Nagel's account of objectivity it will be impossible in practice to shed such contingencies entirely, a subjective element needs to be retained. In the case of natural otherness, the subjective element required to preserve the value of nature as other will be the human perspective. Hailwood claims that, 'the relevant perspective here is the human one confronted by a nature both other and non-instrumentally valuable as such. This is perhaps one of the most objective of human value judgements. If true, it cannot be confined to the idiosyncratic viewpoints of particular individuals or groups: all human beings are confronted by nature as other whether or not they recognize it' (Hailwood 2000: 368).

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In summary, if the recognition of nature as other does involve an aesthetic component it will need to be one different from both Elliot's proposed model of aesthetic response and the 'subjectivist' account of aesthetic response outlined above. If nature is to be valued as other in virtue of aesthetic response, the aesthetic value of nature will need to be non-anthropocentric, non-instrumental, extrinsic and objective. In the next Section I will focus on an alternative account of aesthetic appreciation which satisfies these value constraints. I will maintain that, given this account of aesthetic appreciation, if human beings are to recognise nature as other they will need to appreciate its aesthetic value.

III

I noted at the end of Section I that respect for nature's value as other will require that we approach it in an appropriate way and that discovering what counts as appropriate will require recourse to knowledge provided by the natural sciences. I suggested at the beginning of Section II that if we are to respect nature as other, it will not be enough to know that nature is other, but to perceive and experience nature as other. I now wish to suggest that both of these conditions can be satisfied if respect for nature as other is grounded in appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature.

Allen Carlson's 'natural environmental model' of appreciation is particularly relevant to the way in which we come to respect nature as other by appreciating its aesthetic value. Allen Carlson's 'natural environmental model of appreciation' relies on objective categories of appreciation to ground the appropriateness of that appreciation. These categories are found in the natural sciences and their commonsense predecessors and analogues. These categories ground the appropriateness of aesthetic appreciation. On Carlson's account the aesthetic value of nature is not excessively anthropocentric even although it is tied to human ways of perceiving, since it requires that human beings perceive and value nature as nature, remaining true to its particular qualities and character, its origin and genesis (Carlson 1979: 267–75). This value is best thought of as non-anthropocentric, non-instrumental and extrinsic in the sense of the terms which Hailwood employs and which were outlined in Section I. In addition to meeting these value constraints, the aesthetic value of nature is best thought of as objective. Nature is deemed by Carlson to have primarily positive aesthetic value, possessing positive aesthetic qualities such as order, regularity, harmony and balance. These qualities support individuation and co-exist with qualities such as complexity and diversity. The negative aesthetic values nature and aspects of the natural world appear to possess are either caused by human activity or conditional upon cultural conditioning, practical concerns or idiosyncratic human sensibilities (Carlson 1984: 30–34). Consequently, the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature will require us to shed such contingencies to oc-

copy a more objective standpoint. We can compare this with the case of natural otherness where Hailwood thinks the relevant standpoint is the human one, in which people are confronted by nature as other whether they recognise it or not. Since nature's positive aesthetic value is present whether or not we recognise it and does not vary in line with our aesthetic sensibilities, it can be considered 'objective' for the same reasons and in the same sense Hailwood deems the value of nature's otherness to be objective. If one is to recognise nature's otherness and respect it one will need to shed the contingencies of the self but Hailwood does not indicate how we should do this and the abstract nature of his conception of nature as other provides us with little guidance. Since the way in which we shed the contingencies of the self will require that we remain true to nature's otherness it might be suggested that we do this by appreciating nature appropriately in the manner Carlson suggests. Yuriko Saito shares in Carlson's suggestion that 'something like the scientific, objective standpoint may help free us from whatever is impeding our appreciation of the positive aesthetic value [of nature]' (Saito 1998A: 106). One can plausibly suggest that the adoption of this standpoint is required to reveal nature's otherness.

The term 'appreciate' is used by Carlson not to suggest gratitude towards nature or merely liking what nature presents to us, but rather a sizing up or overview of nature, its processes, forces and objects (Carlson 1995: 395–7). This sizing up requires that the subject remains true to the nature of the object, the nature of which Carlson would likely concur with Hailwood in calling 'other'. Unlike the 'holistic' philosophies that Hailwood is critical of for denying or overlooking nature's otherness, the natural environmental model does not attempt to obliterate traditional subject/object or man/nature dichotomies but acknowledges their existence and emphasises their importance. Furthermore, since in the case of natural objects 'To follow the lead of the object is to be object-ively guided ... appreciating the object for what it is and for having the properties it has' (Carlson 1993: 205) this account of appreciation avoids the charges that the 'subjectivist' account of aesthetic response faced. In appropriate appreciation of nature one will listen to what Saito calls nature's 'diverse modes of speech', in doing so one will be 'appreciating it on its own terms and not as a theatre or a prop for human drama'. However if we are to respect nature's otherness it is not enough to perceive nature's otherness but to listen attentively to its story, a story 'concerning its origin, make up, function and working independent of human presence or involvement' (Saito 1998B: 139–41).

Carlson maintains that this sizing up of nature has an essentially cognitive component and is coupled with a response to nature that is appropriate in light of that sizing up. The cognitive component is essential to appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature and is not merely a means amongst others to such appreciation, if this were the case drugs, hypnotism or Pavlovian conditioning could suffice to achieve the same end (Carlson 1997: 55–6). To appreciate nature appropriately we must know that what we are seeing, touching, smelling or hear-

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ing is natural. Therefore appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature cannot be duplicated in artificial surroundings. This aspect of Carlson's account satisfies the claim advanced in Section I that to respect nature as other it is necessary to perceive nature as other and know nature is other and know that what we perceive as nature is nature. The knowledge that grounds the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature is 'provided by the natural sciences and their common sense predecessors and analogues' (Carlson 1995: 398). This knowledge 'yields appropriate boundaries of appreciation ... [and can enable us to determine] what and how to appreciate in respect to the natural environment' (Carlson 1979: 274). This secures a degree of objectivity for our aesthetic judgements. It endows the aesthetic appreciation of nature with a degree of objectivity to counter the charge of subjectivism frequently levied at those who cite the relevance of aesthetic value to environmental planning, decision and policy making.

Carlson's claim that knowledge provided by the natural and environmental sciences should guide our aesthetic education is shared by Aldo Leopold who observes that such knowledge provides for 'the first embryonic groping of the mass mind toward perception' (Leopold 1968: 173). Saito concurs with both Leopold and Carlson when she notes that although 'aesthetic appreciation has to begin and end with the sensuous ... the sensuous can be, and often is, modified or adjusted by the conceptual' (Saito 1998A: 104). Appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature is thought by Carlson to involve the education of aesthetic response primarily through the environmental and natural sciences; biology, geology, ecology, meteorology and natural history. However Thomas Heyd expresses reservations over the way in which commentators like Carlson have given the role of the sciences priority in appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature. Heyd observes that the history of scientific progress and discovery shows it to have been and to be in the service of cultural, political and economical values and ideals. As a consequence of this Heyd maintains that the knowledge it provides will need to be considered on a 'case by case' basis for the way in which it may 'highlight or obscure aesthetically appreciable features of nature' (Heyd 2001: 135-7). Heyd's vigilance is commendable but it should be noted that *all* branches of knowledge have the potential to be used in the service of cultural, political and economical values and ideals, that this is the case does not mean that we should dismiss their insights. To my knowledge, Carlson has never made the claim that the sciences are infallible nor is he ignorant of the fact that the degree to which they can inform our perception of nature will depend upon the contexts in which they are employed. What Carlson does make clear throughout his writings is that the knowledge provided by the environmental and natural sciences should not eclipse sensory attention to the natural object, force or environment in question.

Stan Godlovitch is another commentator who is particularly critical of the way Carlson prioritises the role of science in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. In his article 'Icebreakers: Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics'

(Godlovitch, S, 1994) he articulates a way of valuing nature as other through aesthetic response that is quite distinct from Carlson's. His model of aesthetic appreciation is frequently referred to as the 'mystery' model of appreciation. It is a model of aesthetic appreciation that seeks to identify in nature 'that which overridingly commands our regard' (Godlovitch 1994: 16). Godlovitch characterises his own view as a 'misanthropic environmentalism', which sees nature as 'fundamentally inaccessible and ultimately alien', possessing a 'mystery of aloofness' (Godlovitch 1994: 19). However, the emphasis which Godlovitch places on the unknowable in nature conflicts with Hailwood's claim that 'what is other need not be strange in the sense of unfamiliar' (Hailwood 2000: 354), where examples of the familiar in nature would include the weather, as well as the plants, animals and insects that populate our environments, cityscapes and countryside. In a similar vein to Heyd, Godlovitch claims that Carlson is guilty of transcending 'immediate experiential limits' in placing the emphasis he does on science. Godlovitch argues that Carlson's attempt to triumph 'surface subjectivism' 'extends (beyond) if not transcends the sensuous surface of our common perceptual world' (Godlovitch 1994: 22). It has already been noted above that a close reading of the texts reveals this interpretation of Carlson to be inaccurate and misguided.

Godlovitch proposes the 'mystery model' as an alternative to Carlson's 'cognitive' model but the 'mystery' model is unable to provide a ground for the appropriate appreciation of nature. It does not provide a source of information or knowledge that can guide the propriety of our responses to nature as other. The 'mystery' model of aesthetic appreciation does not sit comfortably with the otherness view since it is unable to offer us a way to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate appreciation of nature as other. However, both Heyd's and Godlovitch's concerns regarding science's ability to distort nature *are* valid and Carlson has attempted to address these in his later writings in which he claims that one should discount irrelevant information in appreciating nature, in particular information which is false and/or which will obscure the nature of that which is perceived (Carlson 2000A: 216–41, Carlson 2000B: 16–28). Saito has suggested as a consequence of this that Carlson limit the relevant sciences to what she calls the 'observational sciences'; sciences which are not perception transcending but deal with objects and phenomena in their spatial and temporal contexts, examples she gives are geology, biology and evolution (Saito 1998B: 144). In his earlier writings Carlson claimed that imaginative responses to nature should be discouraged insofar as they diverge from remaining true to what Hailwood would call nature's otherness, examples of such responses would be the tendency to demonise or sentimentalise nature (Carlson 1979: 267–75, Carlson 1981: 15–27). However in his later writings Carlson acknowledges that myth *can* facilitate our capacity to appreciate nature appropriately if it draws our attention to natural features that we may have overlooked. So although the mythological may be less straightforwardly scientific this does not mean we are

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justified in judging it any less descriptive of the natural, especially if it illuminates what was obscured beforehand (Carlson 2000A: 232). Saito supplements this with the claim that 'aesthetic appreciation informed by our attempt to make sense of nature, such as science, mythology and folklore, is appropriate because it guides our experience toward understanding nature's own story embodied in its sensuous surface' (Saito 1998B: 135)

Unlike Elliot, Carlson does not grant primary importance to those aesthetic responses that alleviate our fear of nature. On Carlson's account the aesthetic appreciation of nature is not instrumental to the quelling of our fear. The aesthetic experience in question is disinterested. Consequently, appropriate appreciation of nature is ideally non-instrumental and removed from personal concerns. Nature's positive aesthetic value, like the value of nature's otherness, is not affected by whether or not we fear nature. Only our recognition of nature's aesthetic value may depend upon whether we can overcome our fear of nature. The only interests that could be said to remain are cognitive but these do not jeopardise the disinterested aspect of aesthetic experience since they secure a foundation for determining what is, and what is not, appropriate aesthetic experience. In the absence of such interests only a 'vacant cow-like stare' would remain and this would not constitute an appropriate response to nature's aesthetic value (Carlson 2000B: 24–5).

The appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature requires, as does recognition of nature's otherness, that we value nature for its own sake. However, since a conception of this sake requires recourse to the natural and environmental sciences, the non-instrumental aesthetic value of nature is compatible with a conception of otherness as a ground of nature's value. In fact, I wish to suggest that it is not only compatible but that it is a *necessary* component of otherness as a ground of nature's value. It should be noted that I am not attributing an instrumental role to aesthetic appreciation. I do not wish to suggest that aesthetic appreciation is merely a means to ethical appreciation. What I *do* wish to suggest is that nature's value as other must be accompanied by aesthetic value if it is to do any work in the realm of environmental decision and policy making as opposed to the realm of the textbook. The 'otherness' view is one that can be named and described in the abstract with resort to science and its commonsense predecessors and analogues but to see from such a vantage point requires that one actually inhabit that perspective or stance. The otherness view can only enable us to appreciate and respect nature in an appropriate way if it is accompanied by the re-ordering of our sensory, emotional and psychological priorities attendant on aesthetic experience. It is the aesthetic appreciation of nature that enables us to become acquainted with what we already know. It is the aesthetic appreciation of nature that transforms the relations in which we stand to and within the world.

On Carlson's account if we are to appreciate nature appropriately we must appreciate nature as it is in itself, the natural and environmental sciences are

critical to this but these sciences will never be fully developed and as Saito notes human conceptualisation and understanding is itself a type of artifactualisation. (Saito 1998A: 108–9). Therefore, in the last analysis Carlson maintains that 'our appreciative response is to a mystery we will seemingly never comprehend ... in appreciating nature we [will always be aware] that the object is alien, a mystery, and therefore ultimately beyond our understanding, our judgement, our mastery' (Carlson 1993: 222–3).

IV

In conclusion, it may seem that Carlson's account has led us back to where we started but if this is the case then it has led us to a richer conception of nature's otherness than that which Hailwood provides us with. Hailwood's conception of nature as other is one in which nature is owed respect in virtue of its otherness but this conception of nature requires content if we are to be able to distinguish respect from disrespect. A conception of value in nature such as Hailwood's is unable, on its own, to provide an answer to the question of what in nature is to be valued 'for its own sake'. Nature as other cannot, in itself, constitute a means by which we can attain any appreciation of nature unless it is supplemented with an appreciation of nature's aesthetic value. Carlson's account of aesthetic value provides a necessary accompaniment to nature's otherness as a ground of value and meets the value constraints of being non-anthropocentric, non-instrumental, objective and extrinsic. The appropriateness or propriety of our responses to nature and interactions with nature as other requires a cognitive account of aesthetic appreciation of the sort advanced by Carlson and Saito. To be able to respect a reality other than ourselves we must suspend our prejudices and listen attentively to nature's story. The natural and environmental sciences can enable us to translate this story revealing nature as that which is indifferent to human welfare, interests and goals. This account provides one with the resources and knowledge required to recognise and appreciate nature as other appropriately. What and how we perceive will determine how we act in regards to nature and how we expect others to act. As a consequence of this our aesthetic appreciation of nature's value will play a significant role in informing and directing our environmental concerns and shaping our environmental responsibilities.

NOTE

¹ A shorter version of this paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Aesthetics in Houston, Texas, 27–30 October 2004. I would like to thank the chair of the panel, Allen Carlson, and my commentator Jonathan Neufeld for their helpful comments and constructive criticism.

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Sensⁱ/_able Spaces

Space, Art and the Environment

Conference at the University of Iceland, Reykjavík 1st and 2nd June 2006
Hosted by the departments of Philosophy and, Geology and Geography with the 20th Reykjavík Arts Festival

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

The conference deals with the perception and conception of spaces in the built as well as natural environment. The aim of the conference is to bring together a wide range of academics, from the physical sciences, social sciences and humanities, as well as artists and activists who have an interest in the way spaces can be sensed, understood and reconfigured. With this aim in mind we invite papers, posters, art work and displays that focus on ways of understanding and perceiving spaces as well as methodologies and techniques for creating spaces.

Spaces today are continually being reconstituted and reformulated in various ways, often relying on notions of what is *sensible*, narrowly defined by groups with an ideological agenda of some kind and/or vested economic interests. These *sensible* factors often obscure and ignore notions of the *sensable* – that which people perceive through the senses while being-in spaces. The conference is about drawing out these sensibilities based on the *sensable*, as opposed to subjectively formulated agendas or interests which are based on many different notions of the *sensible*.

Papers, posters, art work and displays are encouraged from a broad range of disciplines. The focus can be both on conceptual issues as well as more practical issues, or can be theme-related artwork displayed on site.

More information is to be found at: www.sparten.org