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Political Reasonableness and Nature's Otherness

Abstract: This paper restates my argument that certain forms of liberalism can and should accept a non-instrumental perspective on the natural world. This perspective is unpacked in terms of 'respect for nature's otherness'. Liberalism is represented by Rawlsian political liberalism. I claim there are important congruencies between respect for nature's otherness and the 'reasonableness' involved in political liberalism, such that the latter should incorporate the former. Following a suggestion of B. Baxter I reconsider these congruencies with particular emphasis on the roles of toleration and integrity. I also explain further why I think it arbitrary, rather than logically inconsistent, of the political liberal to exclude respect for nature's otherness from her conception of the political. Finally I argue that insofar as liberalism embraces ecological justice on the basis of the considerability of non-human interests, it cannot consistently exclude respect for nature's otherness.

0. Introduction

It is often assumed that where environmental matters are concerned, liberalism must be a thoroughly anthropocentric instrumentalist theory of politics, the focus of which is entirely on the interests and rights of, and on justice for, human beings. Seen like this liberalism confines *political* consideration of non-human nature to its instrumental importance relative to human interests. When this latter is emphasised liberal theory can be extended to embrace 'environmental justice', through which it may address the just distribution of the environmental goods and bads enjoyed or suffered by human beings (e.g., Wissenburg 1998). But liberalism's relationship to non-instrumental views of the natural world, claiming it to be valuable 'in its own right' and that we should respect it 'for its own sake', seems akin to its relationship to *religions*, and other conceptions of the good life which citizens should have the right to pursue *or not pursue*; such private options are to be sharply separated from the core normative concepts, ideals and principles that constitute the political realm. Recently this picture has begun to change as, in the light of the current 'ecological crisis', perhaps especially an awareness of anthropogenic mass extinction, liberal theorists have started to articulate accounts of 'ecological justice' extending principles of justice to protect the interests of non-human organisms. A powerful version of this position has been defended recently by Brian Baxter (2005). It seems that the prospects for 'greening' liberalism, the mainstream political tradition of western societies, are brightening. In this paper I sketch a suggestion for furthering this process, not by extending the scope of principles of justice to encompass non-human organisms, but by emphasising the affinity between liberalism and

a certain way of understanding nature as more than instrumentally valuable. I call this the ‘otherness view’ of nature. I treat Rawls’ *political* liberalism as the paradigm liberal theory, because the elements of liberal theory most salient to my case are particularly visible within that particular version of contemporary liberalism, although I think my argument can be extended to apply to other forms of liberalism.¹ In section 1 of this paper I summarise the otherness view and then, in section 2, what I take to be its affinities with, grounds for inclusion within, political liberalism (which constitute what I call the congruence claim). In section 3 I discuss Brian Baxter’s suggestion for strengthening this congruence claim by emphasising the virtues of toleration and integrity, and then his objection to my view that it is arbitrary but not logically inconsistent of political liberalism to retain a purely instrumental view of nature. Although Baxter thinks the positive congruence claim is broadly successful, especially when strengthened by emphasising the role of the virtues of toleration and integrity, he argues that arbitrariness is too weak a ground to generate a compelling reason for political liberals to recognise non-instrumental value in nature; for that an appeal to the moral considerability of non-human interests is required. In section 4 I explain why it is arbitrary (i.e., unreasonable in the sense of lacking good reason, rather than strictly incoherent or inconsistent) to exclude *the otherness view* from the political. However, in section 5 I conclude by arguing that if the liberal turns ecological by recognising the moral considerability of non-human interests, he cannot consistently stop there, resist the otherness view and withhold non-instrumental value from the rest of nature.

1. The Otherness View

What is the otherness view, and what would it be to respect nature’s otherness? As presented here the otherness view is not intended as a *proof* that nature has non-instrumental value. It is an interpretation of the claim, fairly frequently encountered in environmental philosophy, green political theory and related contexts, that ‘naturalness’ (roughly speaking an origin and capacity for continued existence independent of humanity) confers non-instrumental value. The otherness view interprets this claim in a way intended to emphasise its affinity with liberalism. I think it is one, although not the only, plausible way of understanding nature’s value independently of any relation to liberalism, but it is that relation I am concerned with here. I will briefly discuss this form of non-instrumentalism about nature before addressing its relation to political liberalism.

Firstly, in order to value non-human nature as such, and for its own sake, we must distinguish between the human and non-human parts of the natural world. We should do this in a way that captures the obvious intertwining of the human with the non-human within our environment without falling into an excessively constructionist way of thinking that throws the whole notion of

¹ Not to every form however. ‘Neo-liberalism’, if that means the application of ‘free market’ solutions to all possible problems, is probably immune.

'non-human nature' into doubt. I think this can be done via the notion of "landscape" where, as Holmes Rolston puts it (Rolston 1995, 40), a landscape is "the shape of nature, modified by culture". This notion of "landscape" as nature/culture hybrid allows us to understand 'nature as other' as nature insofar as it is independent of, or not determined by, the human-oriented significances attributed to it, and the modifications made to it, within local landscapes. It is possible though to consider natural objects as they are independently of their place, or potential place, within the landscape. I am taking it that insofar as one does, one is considering them as natural others.

So nature as other is nature as it is independent of the human-oriented purposes assigned to it, and the modifications made to it, within human landscapes. Every human intervention and artifice qualifies nature's otherness,² which is thus physically vulnerable to our landscaping. But of concern here also is the intellectual fragility brought by the difficulty of sustaining recognition of natural otherness: the ease with which it is overshadowed by the urgent requirements of feeling at home, adequately provisioned and secure in a landscape. Cultures must engage in the activity of landscaping, they must orient themselves in their surroundings as well as develop them as physically necessary 'raw material' for consumption. They need naturally given features—hills, valleys, forests, meadows, plains, shorelines and so on—to treat as landmarks in networks of historical significance and cultural interpretation, of what is not then simply other, but a home. 'Landscaping' thus takes mental as well as physical labour. To go beyond landscaping, to qualify its urgent concerns with consideration of the other, involves the additional effort of remembering, for example, that such and such an element in the environment, say a species of wild animal or plant, or a type of mineral, is 'there for us (with the relevant property rights) to use', is as much the allocation of landscape-internal significance as 'that plain is the place of our ancestors'. To remember the reality of nature as other is to remember there is a nature independent of landscape. To forget it is to stay 'within the landscape' and see things as significant only as (potential) elements within that landscape.

But although it is easy to identify nature and landscape in thought, to think of nature *only* as it features, or might be employed, within our own landscape, nature *as other* is not identical with any landscape. The first step to *respecting* nature's otherness then is to acknowledge its existence, to refrain from identifying landscape with nature as such. The second step is noticing that this recognition of nature's otherness *is* the recognition of a more than purely instrumental status, for the recognition of nature independent of landscape is recognition of nature insofar as it is *not* interpreted in terms only of human oriented ends. As already mentioned, I take this perspective to be a version of the claim that 'naturalness' is valuable. So for example, Keekok Lee claims that recognising nature's "origin and capacity for continued existence and function independently of humanity" and human purposes requires privileging attitudes of awe and hu-

² Without necessarily eliminating it though: we must remember that nature's otherness is not just a matter of 'wilderness', in the sense of spaces physically 'untouched by human hands'. It is present, although often much qualified, within human landscapes. See Hailwood 2000; 2004, 34-6.

mility, over arrogance and dismissive superiority towards what she calls “the Other” that is nature. We should maintain a “respectful distance” towards nature, avoiding “. . . excessive demands of any kind upon it, not only those to sustain ever-increasing consumption, but even those which express our love for it” (Lee 1994, 94–5; see also the articles in Heyd 2005). Similarly, when articulating the ‘green value theory’ Robert Goodin believes captures the basic value orientation of many green politicians and activists, he argues that ‘naturalness’ imparts value to objects, where this is a matter of the history and process of their creation: objects with an origin independent of human intentions, concerns and actions are ‘natural’ in this value adding sense (Goodin 1992, 27). Following Krieger (Krieger 1973) he points to parallels between the way in the aesthetic sphere we generally take replicas, fakes and forgeries to be less valuable than originals, and our similar responses to ‘forging’ nature—to the replacement of real trees with realistic plastic replicas and so on—a response explained by our valuing naturalness (Goodin 1992, 29–30; 32–6).

If we think that nature is non-instrumentally valuable in virtue of its otherness then we consider it an ‘end in itself’, for that reason, not just a means to our own ends. It should be thought of as a negative end, something not to be interfered with (in some way). This might seem shocking given the standard, Kantian, association of ‘ends in themselves’ with rational agency. My proposal is not that we view nature as a rational agent. What I mean is that to the extent that non-human nature is treated as a negative end in virtue of its otherness then it is ‘not interfered with’ in the sense of ridden roughshod over or altered without constraint (and not only because it might be imprudent for us to do such things). Thus one fundamental aspect of respect for nature’s otherness is a recognition that it is not, as it were, ‘just there’ to be used as we see fit. We do *have* to ‘use’ nature of course. The point is the greater the disruption to nature, the more powerful is the required justification. Similarly we ‘use’ each other all the time, such that viewing persons as negative ends certainly does not imply they can never properly be used, manipulated or interfered with; rather sufficient justification for doing so is required, and the onus is on those who would do so to be able to provide sufficient justification (Fox 1993). In the case of non-human nature as other, the abandonment of a purely instrumental view amounts to a constraint on landscaping, not a suicidal refraining from landscaping altogether.

But I take it also that nature *as other* is not a *positive* end, in the sense of something to be pursued or realized for its own sake. Treating persons as positive ends involves identifying with their goals, helping to realize them, or helping persons to realize their potential. But even if we think that (any part of) independent nature has ends of its own, to seek to identify with them and make them our own, or see them as external endorsements of our own goals, is to ignore nature’s otherness as I am understanding it. Here again, *not* identifying one’s own ends, or those of one’s culture, with the goings on of non-human nature is fundamental to respecting its otherness. Nature as other cannot be identified with the significances and purposes internal to landscapes. This point is central to my congruence claim because it implies that nature as other is neutral between (many) landscapes. One aspect of this is a lack of physical

determinism: although it constrains and influences, nature does not physically determine any particular human landscape as that which uniquely must be the landscape for that particular place. One cannot expect seafaring cultures in places where there are no large bodies of water. Nor can one explain variations in the details of cultural landscapes—differences in architecture, characteristic clothing, cuisine, crops, cultivation and building methods and so on—without reference to differences in local nature: climate, sunlight, flora, fauna and so on. But this is not to say that any particular landscape is so physically necessary, or so ‘natural’ that it is there necessarily, as if it were, by definition, an aspect of the given local nature.

Perhaps more significant is that nature as other is neutral relative to landscapes in not providing them with blueprints of moral and political order. It does not ‘determine’ cultural landscapes in the sense of providing lessons in what moral and political relationships should animate them. It provides no model such that would justify calling one (type) of landscape more ‘authentically natural’ than another. It does not tell us how to live, in that sense. There is no space here to develop this claim fully; the fundamental point is that since nature encompasses so many different phenomena, the selection of some aspect to emulate, say the absence of hierarchical, coercive institutions, must reflect prior human values and commitments, rather than simply a will to ‘live in accordance with nature’, in *the* authentically natural society (Mill 1904; de-Shalit 1997; Hailwood 2004, ch. 3). This is not to deny that our experience of the world teaches us what to do, *given our goals and desires*: for instance, given you value your life and health you had better not jump unsupported off a cliff. But if non-hierarchical anarchic society is thought desirable, this cannot (properly) be because we have decided to live ‘as nature does’, and we think nature ‘tells’ us that is how to do it. From the standpoint of respecting nature’s otherness, talk of societies as more or less ‘in harmony with nature’, can cash out only in terms of the extent of their disruption of nature. I have in mind here, for example, the way Robert Goodin distinguishes societies which are relatively more ‘in harmony with’ nature, and those which are ‘less natural’ because they greatly ‘impose on’ and ‘tyrannize over’ nature. Thus one might say that even though it is the product of millennia of landscaping, the English countryside is more ‘in harmony with nature’ than is the landscape of the Los Angeles megapolis, which involves a greater disruption of natural processes, a more thorough super-imposition of human order onto the natural order (Goodin 1992, 50–2).

2. Reasonableness and Congruence

Now the congruence claim trades on the features of respect for nature’s otherness involved in not identifying landscape with nature; so that on the one hand nature as such is not equated with its (potential) uses within landscapes, and on the other hand, landscapes are not viewed as mere extensions of nature, ‘naturally given’ either physically or morally. I think these features of the otherness view make it peculiarly apt for inclusion within the political liberal conception of politics. To see this, consider the notion of “reasonableness”.

In its most basic and general sense, to be ‘politically reasonable’ is to attempt to view political arrangements from the perspective of other affected persons, to put oneself in their position to see whether one would still agree to the arrangement or would choose another. Such reasonableness informs Rawls’ ‘original position’ thought experiment within which principles of justice are chosen behind a ‘veil of ignorance’ excluding knowledge pertaining to the identities of the individual choosers. Rawls’ move to ‘*political*’ liberalism reflects a concern to address the ‘fact of reasonable pluralism’: modern democratic societies contain conflicting, reasonable, comprehensive doctrines,³ not all of which are comprehensively liberal. The original position and the principles of justice as fairness remain, but within a theoretical context reinterpreted to be consistent with the fact of reasonable pluralism, removing what Rawls came to see as the ‘sectarian’ comprehensively liberal basis of their earlier formulation in *A Theory of Justice*. It is unreasonable to ground liberalism within a comprehensive (e.g., Kantian) doctrine when we know that some affected persons will reject it on the grounds it conflicts with their own, reasonably held, comprehensive doctrine (Rawls 1996, xlii). To be stable, without presupposing enforcement of a particular comprehensive doctrine, liberalism must be ‘political’ in relying on ideas (e.g., of freedom and equality) latent within the public, political sphere, able to be the focus of an overlapping consensus between comprehensive doctrines. The liberal conception of the political in general, and justice in particular, will thus be ‘freestanding’ in not presupposing the truth of any particular one of them. I am not going to comment on the plausibility or coherence of Rawls’ ‘move to the political’. I am concerned with it here because it sharpens the focus on those implications of reasonableness of particular relevance to my argument.

When distinguishing ‘the reasonable’ and ‘the rational’ in political liberal mode, Rawls explains that being reasonable denotes “... first a willingness to propose fair terms of social cooperation that others as free and equal also might endorse, and to act on these terms, provided others do, even contrary to one’s own interest; and second, a recognition of the burdens of judgment and acceptance of their consequences for one’s attitude (including toleration) toward other comprehensive doctrines.” (Rawls 1996, 375)⁴

It is *unreasonable* to “engage in cooperative schemes” yet remain “unwilling to honor, or ... propose, except as a necessary public pretense, any general principles or standards for specifying fair terms of cooperation”; and so to be “ready to violate such terms as suits [one’s] interests when circumstances allow.” (Rawls 1996, 50) ‘Unreasonable’, but not necessarily ‘irrational’: ‘the rational’ applies

³ A comprehensive doctrine “includes conceptions of what is of value in human life, and ideals of personal character, as well as ideals of friendship and of familial and associational relationships, and much else that is to inform our conduct, and in the limit [applies] to our life as a whole. ... Many religious and philosophical doctrines aspire to be both general [i.e., apply to all subjects universally] and comprehensive.” (Rawls 1996, 13)

⁴ Rawls believes that, in the absence of oppression, the ‘burdens of judgment’ make a plurality of comprehensive doctrines inevitable. ‘The ‘burdens of judgment’, as distinct from factors such as irrationality, ignorance and narrow self-interest include the conflicting and complex nature of empirical and scientific evidence; the way the indeterminacy of our concepts requires we rely on judgments about, and interpretation of, them; and differences in background and life experience. See, for example, Rawls 1996, 56–7; 2001, 35–6.

to the agent's pursuit of "ends and interests peculiarly its own"; and to how these are "adopted, affirmed and given priority" (ibid). The sphere of the rational is the non-political selection, weighting and pursuit of 'private' ends. Under certain conditions (i.e., those conducive to success), it may be rational to seek the enforcement of one's comprehensive doctrine over others via the coercive power of the state. But it would not be reasonable: reasonableness is the spirit of political conceptions properly selected under conditions of reasonable pluralism. Thus *reasonable* pluralism may be distinguished from mere pluralism, not only in being the outcome of the burdens of judgment, but as containing comprehensive doctrines that are reasonable in the sense that they do not entail the rightness of suppressing other reasonable conceptions, or the liberties of thought and conscience, even when suppression is feasible.⁵

The willingness 'reasonably' to propose fair terms of cooperation that free and equal people might endorse, and to accept the consequences of the burdens of judgment, entails an approach to politics that is significantly neutral and anti-expressivist. Political conceptions and principles are neutral in the relevant sense when they are not "designed to favour any particular comprehensive doctrine" (Rawls 1996, 193–4). This is not to subscribe to impossible absolute value neutrality, or to expect policies with effects that are neutral between reasonable individuals and ways of life. The point is that reasonable people do not seek political principles justifiable only with reference to their own comprehensive views of what it is to live a good life, when they know that others, quite reasonably, do not share them. So, for example, given a (reasonable) plurality of religious views (including atheism and agnosticism), the reasonable person does not seek political principles acceptable only to someone of her faith; she does not see the state, or its underlying basic principles and constitution, as the coercive expression, the mere political wing, of her religion. Thus reasonableness here also involves accepting a significant measure of anti-expressivism. Following Charles Larmore (Larmore 1987; 1990), 'expressivism' is the 'holistic' view that there should be as much continuity as possible between the 'personal' and 'political', that ideally there should be no gap between the state (or background conception of the political) and the deepest personal commitments of individuals. Anti-expressivism simply denies that: the reasonable person does not seek to identify the state or political with her own conception of the good life.

Compare now the otherness view as sketched above. Cultural forms and usages are not just 'read off' independent nature, which precisely is not to be identified with particular landscapes, any more than the neutral state is to be identified with particular comprehensive doctrines. Nature does not tell us what landscapes to make, any more than the neutral state should enforce a way of life or tell us what comprehensive doctrine to adopt. The neutral state is not required to give special assistance to particular life choices only because they turn out to be relatively demanding in terms of time and material resources, and so are less likely to thrive than alternatives, in this political environment. Similarly, certain landscapes may be more difficult, yet not impossible, to sustain given

⁵ That reasonable pluralism in this sense is not *fully* realized in the actual world is of course acknowledged by Rawls (for example, Rawls 1996, 64).

a set of local natural conditions. As is often remarked, liberal neutrality could never be *absolute*. The plurality relative to which the state is to be neutral is a ‘reasonable’ plurality: the citizens committed to private conceptions are not thereby made unwilling, either to uphold a ‘fair system of cooperation’, or to refrain from seeking the power to impose their own on the others. There is no question of neutrality with respect to actively intolerant and destructive doctrines or citizens. The neutrality of nature as other is not absolute either, for even the most favourable parts of the natural world will not sustain more than a fraction of conceivable landscapes. There are the natural constraints already mentioned but, in addition, nature will not sustain cultural ends pursued in a manner and to a degree that disregards natural processes and equilibria. Otherwise to view nature as it is independently of landscape is to recognise significant neutrality.

Now I emphasise the *recognition* or *acceptance* of neutrality here. Liberal neutrality is about reasons for acting (or reasons appealed to justify political principles to regulate state action). Nature’s ‘neutrality’, understood within the context of the otherness view, is also about reasons for action (although obviously not *nature’s* reasons for action): reasons entailing that independent nature should be thought of as somehow especially validating or ‘requiring’ particular forms of landscape are inconsistent with respect for nature’s otherness. So are reasons entailing that independent nature is properly thought of as no more than the landscape or an extension of culture (for example, this natural item is *just* an industrial resource, which we need think of only in terms of how to exploit most profitably for now and the future). Similarly, reasons for action entailing that the state (or background conception of the political), should be thought of as properly validating, or ‘requiring’ all citizens to adopt, a particular comprehensive doctrine, are inconsistent with accepting political neutrality. So are reasons for action entailing that the state should be thought of as but the political expression of a particular comprehensive doctrine.

I emphasise also that the otherness view, or respect for nature’s otherness, does not constitute a comprehensive doctrine of the good. Otherwise, the political liberal will insist on its exclusion to avoid *unreasonable* colonization of the political by ‘green’ elements. She will argue that whereas we may assume everyone values nature instrumentally as a necessary resource, this is not the case for non-instrumental views; free and equal people may or may not hold these: whether external nature should be viewed *only* as a resource is a matter for non-public, comprehensive doctrines. Now certainly there seems enough continuity between liberal reasonableness and the otherness view, to establish the latter as not *just another* comprehensive doctrine. But crucial here is that it is not in itself a comprehensive doctrine prescribing a determinate way of life at all, never mind one supposed to be peculiarly ‘natural’ or in harmony with nature. Rather it concerns itself non-comprehensively with a ‘thin’ good. Given the distinction between ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ senses of ‘conception of the good’, one can claim that a given political conception or principle, and the presupposed thin conception(s) of the good, are neutral with respect to (at least many) ‘thick’ conceptions of the good (or *comprehensive* doctrines). The latter embody substantive views of how

to live one's life, depictions of one's place in the world that at the limit strive for metaphysical completeness. If we say, for example, that free speech and equality of opportunity are good then we are already taking on board certain controversial value commitments. However, free speech and equal opportunities are not 'thick' goods, not 'ways of life'; they place constraints on the ways lives might be lived, but commitment to them is consistent with a wide variety of possible substantive views of how one ought to live. So it is with respecting nature's otherness. This excludes treating nature *purely* instrumentally, so incorporating it within the political liberal conception decreases the number or range of permissible ways of living. It is not 'neutral' with regard to ways of living incompatible with respect for nature's otherness as a political commitment, in addition to those incompatible with respect for persons as free and equal. The congruence claim holds that these two grounds of impermissibility are continuous with each other.

On the other hand, it remains possible for those with more 'comprehensive' ways of valuing nature, or 'being green', to accept respect for nature's otherness as a *political* commitment. For example, what Avner de-Shalit terms "hard environmentalism" (de-Shalit 1997), in which environmental concern precisely is the organising element of a comprehensive doctrine envisioning the complete human good in a society free from alienation, cannot enter into a reasonable political conception, but the otherness view can, I suggest. Yet it is to be hoped that respect for nature's otherness is something such 'comprehensive greens', with 'hard environmentalist' perspectives, may endorse *politically*, even though their comprehensive account concerning the optimum relation to nature for producing the good life is excluded from the political conception used to determine basic political principles and constitutional essentials.

What I am proposing then is embedding a thin, non-comprehensive form of non-instrumentalism about nature within the political liberal conception of the political because of the congruencies between the otherness view and the requirements of political reasonableness. It seems to me in principle possible to do this because the otherness view, whilst precisely not requiring us to view nature as a collection of rational agents from whom we should expect reciprocal reasonableness, does not violate neutrality or anti-expressivism, but extends them to nature. The requirements of this, quite general, form of non-instrumentalism are of course difficult to specify in terms of laws, principles and precise actions. However, a politically embedded commitment to recognising nature as a non-instrumental negative end would involve, at least, "an all-round rejection of . . . the uncontrolled pillage of natural resources and raw materials", and a general will to refrain 'from destructive intervention in the circuits of the natural ecosystem.'⁶ What exactly this requires in a given historical moment should be a matter of democratic deliberation for free and equal citizens of a liberal society.

⁶ Statements from Die Grünen Election Manifesto, Sec I, p. 7, quoted in Goodin 1992, 186. My point is that some such statements should be constitutional commitments of the politically liberal state, alongside freedom and equality.

3. Toleration and Integrity

But how strong is the connection between the otherness view and the requirements of political reasonableness established by the congruence claim? Is it sufficiently strong to convince the political liberal to endorse the otherness view as a political commitment? I begin to address this now by considering a suggestion Brian Baxter makes whilst discussing an earlier statement of my argument (Baxter 2005, 102–8). He indicates that the congruence argument may be strengthened by emphasising the virtue of toleration and the role of integrity. I have indeed claimed elsewhere that respect for nature’s otherness seems continuous with the exercise of virtuous citizenship in accordance with political reasonableness (Hailwood 2003; 2004, 117–121; 2005). Having distinguished the rational pursuit of private ends from the reasonable construction of the political, the liberal does not seek to identify the former with the latter; she accepts that one should not expect the state to embody or enforce one’s own private commitments anymore than it should anyone else’s. So she has the “very great virtues . . . [of] political cooperation that make a constitutional regime possible” (Rawls 1996, 151). We might consider these virtues, including toleration, as dispositions to respect otherness in the political realm. Toleration is important here because even if one generally values the presence of diverse reasonable doctrines, one may occasionally regret the inconveniences involved: the diversion of social resources to ways of life not one’s own, the occasionally unsettling shock of face to face encounters with difference, and the complicating of political decision making. One might sometimes wish for an easier life in which the rational pursuit of private ends is unconstrained by the reasonable. Sustained reasonableness requires the virtue of toleration. Similarly I think one might view nature as a negative end, a general constraint, yet find this inconvenient, precisely because it is a constraint on the pursuit of other ends. It seems appropriate here to talk of *tolerating* nature as other; a refraining from stamping out its every inconvenient encroachment and obliterating every annoying natural obstacle. So it seems to me that respect for (involving toleration of) otherness is continuous between the realms of people, state and non-human nature. None of these are just there to be used for the purposes of particular individuals and groups, identified simply as ‘mine’ or ‘ours’, even though it might often seem easier, instrumentally rational, to do so. For this reason I suggest that respect for nature’s otherness is at home amongst the liberal virtues and might be part of what Rawls terms society’s “political capital” (Rawls 2001, 118).

Now Baxter suggests this argument could be strengthened, especially with reference to the concept of integrity as explicated recently by Tim Hayward (Baxter 2005, 106–7; Hayward 1998, 79–88). The point partly concerns the sheer complexity and demandingness of the toleration required by political reasonableness. Not only must one put up with the offensive, shocking or inconvenient life choices of others, but deal “. . . appropriately with the behaviour of fellow citizens which steps over the boundary of reasonableness . . . without allowing it to poison one’s general attitude to fellow citizens to the extent of seeking authoritarian or draconian responses to such problems. This is a matter

of avoiding self-corruption, or maintaining integrity.” (Baxter 2005, 107) The “person of moral integrity” summons the “appropriate firmness in dealing with the unreasonable”, whilst retaining respect for, and toleration of, (reasonable) life choices she personally would not dream of pursuing. In terms of relations to nature, “one will respect nature’s otherness, tolerate its inconveniences and occasionally shocking aspects, and deal appropriately with its unthinking attacks on the interests of human beings without allowing oneself to be dragged into an authoritarian or uncaring attitude towards it.” (ibid) But then this is not a matter of mere congruence between distinct virtues, *it is the very same virtue at play in both cases*. Deploying Hayward’s concept of integrity allows us to see this clearly: “for it is then readily apparent that what is involved is the unity of moral individuals as they exercise a virtue with respect to different but equally appropriate objects.” (ibid)

I agree. When one is thinking of the toleration component of reasonableness and the toleration component of respect for nature’s otherness, one is considering one identical virtue in relation to different objects, not distinct but congruent virtues. Moreover, as Baxter also points out (Baxter 2005, 107–8), the fact that in the nature case what is tolerated is not rational or moral agency does not alter this. For there are members of liberal society who are likewise not rational or moral agents yet rightly are not denied toleration on those grounds. Such distinctions as the rational/non-rational distinction are sufficient however to ground difference, rather than identity, between respect for nature’s otherness and political reasonableness themselves. *Political* reasonableness is a matter of attitudes adopted in the construction of the political in cooperation with fellow rational and moral agents and so, in the central cases, must involve reciprocity. Respect for nature’s otherness is a matter of human attitudes to the non-human and cannot involve reciprocity. But the congruencies between them make them more than compatible in my view: they have a positive affinity; and this claim is strengthened by noticing that they share the same virtue of toleration, and that applying it one case whilst withholding it in the other raises issues of integrity. We should pay more attention to how the notion of integrity applies to the congruence claim.

On Hayward’s ‘integral’ account integrity, encompassing bodily, psychological and cognitive integration, equilibrium and coherence, as well as the conscientious adherence to principle associated with integrity as a moral virtue, is the most fundamental general interest human beings have (Hayward 1998, 79–88). These levels of integrity themselves need to be integrated: for example, mere principled commitment is insufficient for moral integrity; they should be the right principles. A disposition to stick to false principles can signal a lack of cognitive and/or psychological integrity; be a matter of mental disequilibrium producing bad judgement or of having a false or incoherent view of the world and one’s place in it, or some combination of these (Hayward 1998, 81–4). There seem to be two useful applications of this notion of integrity in the context of the role of toleration in the congruency claim. Firstly, toleration (and so reasonableness and respect for nature’s otherness) is demanding because of the strain it puts on integrity. Secondly, given nature should be tolerated then withholding it shows

at least a lack of the cognitive integrity required for moral integrity. And this is particularly true for liberals already committed to toleration in the political sphere.

The demandingness of toleration, the strain placed on integrity, contributes to the ‘fragility’ of the otherness view: the difficulty of maintaining nature’s otherness in view given the urgency of landscaping concerns; the parallel political difficulty being that of sustaining political reasonableness whilst pursuing private ends. There are various ways of considering these difficulties. One, which illuminates the connection with integrity, is to speak of ‘objectivity’, where the objectivity of the otherness view is captured well by Thomas Nagel’s conception of it as a ‘stepping back’ from relatively subjective viewpoints (Nagel 1986). In the present context ‘intra-landscaping’ concerns and commitments play the latter role, the more objective perspective being a matter of viewing nature as it is independently of them. Particularly helpful is the way Nagel emphasises the inevitable tension between subjective and objective perspectives whilst insisting it cannot be resolved simply by eliminating the subjective in favour of the objective, or vice versa. Both are perspectives on reality, and some genuine reasons for action, as well as the sheer ‘what it is like’ of experience, are only available relatively subjectively. One of Nagel’s concerns is that ethical objectivity must be pursuable without too much disruption of personal life and relationships constituted by relatively subjective yet genuine commitments (Nagel 1986, 155–6). And we must agree that any objective, general view that nature is valuable for its own sake has to coexist with the real ‘anthropocentric’ imperatives arising from our situation as ‘naturally landscaping’ creatures, a situation itself visible from an objective standpoint. Thus the otherness view exacerbates what Nagel calls “... the new problem of reintegration, the problem of how to incorporate these results into the life and self-knowledge of an ordinary human being. One has to *be* the creature whom one has subjected to detached examination, and one has to live in the world that has been revealed to an extremely distilled fraction of oneself”. (Nagel 1986, 9) Another aspect of this problem for Nagel is that of how to bring objective moral demands into the subjective perspective, the arena of personal *motivation*, so that they do not remain merely intellectual commitments lacking any force when put alongside more subjective reasons for action. The issue of ‘motivating justice’ is of course a general problem for theories of justice, not least that of Rawls. We may view the extra ‘objective’ material introduced by the otherness view as making this already difficult task even more difficult. Obviously it brings new tensions, tensions which would be best dealt with with integrity.

Hayward emphasises the diachronic dimension to cognitive and moral integrity, particularly our need to ground diachronic identity through coherent narratives encompassing our ongoing motivations, projects and commitments (Hayward 1998, 81; following MacIntyre 1981). Presumably the more divergent the demands one commits oneself to, the harder it is to tell a coherent story encompassing them. We can understand the pull of the ‘simple life’ as the wish to maintain integrity in one’s ‘personal dealings’, the relatively subjective areas of life, without the added inconveniences and complications brought by for ex-

ample the demands of toleration. Such a wish provides *prima facie* subjective motivation to reject the more impersonal demands of political reasonableness and respect for nature's otherness. But this would be at the cost of a loss of overall integrity, given the objective normative force of those demands. Thus overall integrity for the reasonable political liberal must involve resisting the urge to resolve such tensions by simply collapsing together the commitments of '*citoyen* and *homme*' into one overall identity (as informed by a doctrine specifying proper political relations as part of an overall conception of the good life). Similarly the otherness view allows for the pursuit of relatively 'subjective' values and commitments as part of the cultural landscape, but within limits marking respect for nature's otherness: without entirely and permanently identifying nature with its role within landscaping projects.

Political reasonableness and respect for nature's otherness share these difficulties along with sharing the virtue of toleration. Political toleration is somewhat less fragile because, although imperfectly realized, it benefits from historically significant traditions of advocacy and institutionalization. Toleration of nature as a component of respect for nature's otherness does not. And again one can appreciate the pull of simplification: the wish to avoid the further complications, stresses and strains, inherent in the demand to tolerate nature *as well*, by simply ignoring nature's otherness. That would be a mistake in my view. The otherness view is not a comprehensive doctrine, and I think there are sufficient continuities between it and the requirements of reasonableness to justify its inclusion within the political liberal order. This is my congruence claim, a claim strengthened, as Baxter suggests, by emphasising the roles of toleration and integrity.

4. Arbitrary Instrumentalism

However, I think it would also be a mistake to short circuit the argument in the opposite direction at this point by inferring too quickly that otherwise tolerant liberals are *logically inconsistent* if they do not also tolerate nature as other. I do claim though that retaining a purely instrumental view of nature by excluding the otherness view from political liberalism is *arbitrary* (lacking good reason). Let us follow Brian Baxter in referring to those holding such a position as 'instrumental political liberals' (Baxter 2005, 103). Now, in his discussion of my position, Baxter argues that arbitrariness is too weak a charge to compel instrumental political liberals to embrace more than an instrumental valuation of nature. Although it points towards ecological justice, it needs strengthening with reasons to consider non-human welfare interests, reasons which, following such theorists as Singer and DeGrazia, Baxter supplies, without confining, as those theorists do, the scope of 'having interests' to sentient organisms (Baxter, chs. 4–5). Certainly the otherness view in itself cannot constitute a theory of ecological justice. Rather it concerns itself, in as metaphysically thin a way as possible, with the general value orientation of mainstream political assumptions about the non-human world. I return to the relation between the otherness view and ecological justice below. The central question for this section of the paper is why satisfy ourselves with convicting instrumental political liberals of

the lesser charge of arbitrariness, rather than the stricter one of incoherence or inconsistency?

The arbitrariness charge points to a significant and preventable cognitive dissonance within the instrumental political liberal position, *especially in the light of the congruency claim* and surrounding issues touched on above. But this need not amount to logical incoherence because one can deny without contradiction the existence of nature as other. The idea of nature as other is not quite the same as that of ‘nonhuman nature’ in the sense of a natural world causally independent of humanity. Only someone in the grip of a scepticism too radical to be politically reasonable would deny existence to the latter. But the otherness view takes nature not just as causally independent, but as ‘landscape-independent’. I mentioned earlier two aspects of ‘respect for nature’s otherness’: the recognition that there is a nature independent of landscape; i.e., independent of the human-oriented significances assigned to it within landscapes, and secondly, the awareness that this recognition *is* recognition of a more than purely instrumental status. The existence of causally independent nature does not entail that of landscape independent nature in the sense constitutive of the otherness view. Consequently the instrumental political liberal cannot be forced at logic point to respect nature’s otherness merely because she is not a radical sceptic about nature. It is not necessarily incoherent to believe the natural universe is in effect *no more than* one vast human landscape, or potential human landscape, viewed *only* in terms of how it may be made over in accordance with our interests, bent to human-oriented purposes. Not necessarily any less coherent than to suppose, on an attenuated, purely instrumental conception of reason, that “... tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the world to the scratching of my finger”. (Hume 1740/1969, II.iii.3) Still, instrumental political liberalism cannot invoke comprehensive doctrines specifying the world as ours to own and use as we (hopefully rationally) please, perhaps as God’s gift to us, or through the interpretation of messages to that effect written into the ‘natural order of things’. So I suggest it is arbitrary to retain the instrumental default by collapsing nature as other into the human landscape, particularly given the congruencies between the otherness view, which is not in itself a comprehensive doctrine, and political liberal reasonableness. A further explanation of the durability of instrumentalism here might be the continued influence of comprehensive doctrines, like those just mentioned, that informed (in Lockean ways for example) the liberal tradition of which political liberalism is a contemporary variant. But this cannot be a good (reasonable) reason to retain it anymore than the undoubted influence of Christian teachings on the historical development of liberal ideas would justify the ineliminable presence of specifically Christian doctrine within the reasonable political conception.

Now it might be thought open to the political liberal to accept the nature/landscape distinction without also accepting that recognition of landscape-independent nature amounts also to recognition of a more than instrumental status. The political liberal might want to say that nature as other can be viewed as neither instrumentally nor non-instrumentally valuable; as ‘just there’ as it were. Indeed this might seem no more than an application of the polit-

ically reasonable method of avoidance of controversial metaphysical questions and divisive moral issues. It is not an option here however because nature as other cannot be viewed, at least not sustainably, simply as something which just *is*, and as such neither instrumentally nor non-instrumentally valuable. Value freedom or neutrality in this sense, in this context, will collapse either into something like the otherness view or into a pure instrumentalism that reduces nature to landscape. Nature must be viewed, in addition to something which 'just exists', as something at least potentially useful (if not useless). We can't recognise the existence of something outside the landscape and perpetually refrain from wondering whether or how we can use it—incorporate it, assimilate it into our shared plans and life. The question is whether it is viewed *only* as something at least potentially useful (only as something identified in terms of landscaping purposes); or whether it *retains* some significance as independent of that; i.e., qua other. The latter significance I am referring to as 'non-instrumental'—it is not just instrumental. The former view is a purely instrumental, resourcist understanding of nature. It might be characterised as what Heidegger called 'the technological understanding of being', in which nature plays the role of a 'standing reserve', contemplated only as potentially available for ordering and assimilation within our system of use values (Heidegger 1954/1977). The not just instrumental view preserves the possibility of, to some extent, 'letting being be'. The question is whether, in the context of recognising nature as other, something like the 'technological understanding of being' can be kept at bay, or whether it promptly rushes in to extinguish that recognition, collapsing nature back into the landscape. To the extent that it is held off, the otherness of nature remains in view, and does so non-instrumentally. So, as I am understanding it, recognition of nature as other, as it is independent of landscape, *must* involve a non-instrumental perspective, in that sense must involve respect for nature's otherness. This is a reminder that one may view the same object under the description of natural other, and under the description given by its role in the landscape, which constitutes an anthropocentric instrumental perspective on it. A paradigm here is a 'pest', such as a fox, which is also not just a pest but an organism with interests and a mode of flourishing of its own. The same object may thus be viewed both instrumentally and non-instrumentally. This is not just a peculiarity of the otherness view for, as already mentioned, the same is true of persons, who may be viewed as means (we 'use' each other in one way or another all the time), but not as *mere* means. But 'value freedom', in the sense of a stable suspension of the instrumental/non-instrumental dimension, is not an option for nature, any more than it is for humanity. It remains the case though that maintaining instrumental political liberalism, despite the availability of the otherness view and its congruencies with reasonableness, is a matter of arbitrary human chauvinism rather than strict logical inconsistency.

5. Ecological Liberalism and the Otherness View

The situation is different if the liberal can be brought to accept the considerability of non-human welfare interests. It is inconsistent of such ecological liberalism

to reject the otherness view. Consequently, *if* political liberalism is inconsistent to refuse its transformation, via the consideration of non-human interests, into ecological liberalism, then it is also inconsistent to reject the otherness view. There is no space here to assess at all adequately the claim that political liberals should be ecological liberals. But why must ecological liberals also accept the otherness view? I think that ecological liberalism constitutes a bridgehead for the otherness view which, once established, cannot remain a mere bridgehead.

Ecological liberalism affirms the moral considerability of the welfare interests of non-human organisms for their own sake. In doing so it at least implicitly recognises aspects of what I have been calling nature's otherness: non-human organisms and their welfare interests are being considered as they are independently of our interests, and human oriented ends; that is as landscape-independent. This recognition cannot be confined consistently to just those aspects of nature, and withheld from everything else with a landscape-independent natural history. The ecological liberal has *already* stepped back from a perspective constituted entirely by significances internal to landscapes: 'this animal symbolises our national character, that organism is a pest, that one provides good hunting', and so on. He has stepped back from such concerns to recognise a morally considerable natural reality independent of them. In doing so he has attained a perspective from which he is confronted also by the otherness of segments of nature with no interests of their own; he finds himself to have stepped back also from a perspective confined to viewing the world in terms only of such landscaping concerns as signified by for example, 'that river is our vital water resource, that range of hills is our recreational space, under this ground lies our industrial raw materials', and so on. The objective recognition of the landscape-independence of organisms and their interests cannot close its eyes to the landscape independence of the rest of nature, as if the removal of non-human organisms would amount to the removal of landscape-independent nature altogether (which is implied by viewing abiotic nature as significant only as life support for the biotic). The ecological liberal cannot avoid this, in the way logically open to the non-ecological instrumental liberal, by denying the landscape-independence of nature altogether, because he already accepts it with respect to non-human organisms and their interests. Nor for the reasons given above can he maintain that abiotic nature is neither instrumentally, nor non-instrumentally valuable, but 'just is'.

The upshot here is that on the otherness view everything naturally other is 'morally considerable' to the extent of being owed some recognition as more than instrumentally valuable. Being a 'mere thing' is a status conferred on objects as they are within human landscapes. This may seem a *reductio ad absurdum* to those who would wish to collapse the idea of moral considerability, at least within political contexts, into that of principles of distributive justice that may be easily operationalized. And Baxter is right when he argues that the 'end that is nature as other' needs to be disaggregated if it is to allow such principles, and that interest-based accounts may effect that disaggregation (Baxter 2005, 105). But in addition to encompassing the considerability of non-human interests the otherness view extends the considerability to capture a wider, more diffuse sense

of nature's value, often expressed by greens: a sense that we shouldn't just unthinkingly assimilate it to our own purposes, even if no interests are harmed⁷. That is, we should be circumspect in our imposition of ourselves upon the world, where this includes, without being reducible to, concern for non-human welfare interests. This seems to me a more thorough 'greening' of liberalism than an ecological liberalism focused on interests, one that such an ecological liberalism cannot consistently resist. And, because of the congruencies between respect for nature's otherness and political reasonableness, one that cannot be confined properly to the sub-political domains of religion and aesthetics.

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⁷ See for example Keekok Lee's discussion of the value of nature's otherness as constituting a reason to refrain from terraforming Mars (Lee 1994).