III. The Land Ethic

A. The Land Ethic - Aldo Leopold 1887-1948 A Sand County Almanac (1949) essay "the Land Ethic" --

1. lays the thematic ground for the first ecocentric ethic

2. a radical rethinking of ethics in light of ecology and the sustained abuse of the environment is an absolute necessity

3. Early life a conservationsit -- nature a resource to be managed "the varmint question"

4. "Thinking Like a Mountain"

B. Leopold's extensionism

1. Leopold wants to develop an ethical philosophy that

establishes a moral relationship between humans and

the land and the animals and plants

2. his philosophy is holistic

a. define the new boundaries of the moral

community

i. basis for moral standing

ii. question of value

b. new understanding of how we should live in

this moral community - the moral "ought"

c. suggest limitations on social organization and

policy

C. Three assumptions throughout his argument.

1. it is a fact that the earth is alive not dead matter, a living world

a. reducible to physical laws

b. not reducible to quantification or the dollar

2. living world is too complex to be predictable,

a. cannot predict the consequences of our actions

b. unanticipated and unintended consequences

of our actions

i. overfishing of pollock

ii. coral reefs

iii. Black Sea

3. accepts the holistic perspective of ecology

a. everything is interconnected, interrelated

b. even man no subject outside or above the world

4. According to Leopold the conqueror role is self- defeating.

a. Unstated assumption is that the conqueror knows

all, can foresee and therefore predict and control the consequences of his actions

b. that the conqueror knows both who and what is valuable, and who and what is worthless

5. Both of these are wrong

a. the ecosphere is so complex that its workings exceed science's attempts to grasp it

b. values in a capitalist society are based on market,

on economics

c. doesn't take into account aesthetic elements,

song birds and wild flowers are valueless

e. doesn't take into account essential elements

of the ecosphere like marshes and wetlands

and tree covered hillsides that are essential to

the entire functioning of the systems

D. Leopold's argument

1. "biotic pyramid"

a. complexly organized and intricate structure of biotic and abiotic elements through which solar energy flows

b. Species of this biotic pyramid arranged in "trophic levels"

i. according to the food they eat,

ii. population get smaller as you get to the top levels, less predators the higher up on the food chain

c.. Man is not at the top. he shares and intermediate

layer with the bears, racoons, and squirrels which eat both meat and vegetables

d. Lines of dependencey are food chains, and each species is a link in many chains

"The pyramid is a tangle of chains so complex as to seem disorderly, yet the stability of the system proves it to be a highly organized structure. Its functioning depends on the cooperation and competition of its diverse parts.'

e. The trend of evolution is to elaborate and

diversify biota in relation to the abiotic environment over a long period of time

f. the line between biotic and abiotic elements is

is very fine

i. dead trees through the work of fungi

and insects become rich soil

ii. soil then nutures living things

"Land, then, is not merely soil; it is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuti of soils, plants, and animals."

g. There is always decay and death but a return to the soil

h. the reality is a whole system

i. complex

ii. interdependent

iii. in flux

4. From this holistic understanding Leopold believes that an ethical theory, the land ethic

a. fundamental reality: the land communtiy

b. the land, its biotic and abiotic elements,

have moral standing

i. include species

ii. ecosystems

b. human beings are members of this land community with moral standing

i. not Lord of Earth

ii. but member

b. as members

i. respect for all members

ii. respect for community as whole

c. basic moral principle

"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity of the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."

d. consequentalists

i. determine the morality of an act or

policy, its rightness or wrongness by the

effect it has on the community

ii. so complex that we can't determine the

consequences of our actions

c. actions and policies

i. Preservation of life forms and biotic and abiotic diversity necessitate that we introduce changes slowly so adaptation can be accomplished

ii. avoid introducing alien species to ecosystems

iii. human intervention should be slow and

minimal

iv. genetically modified organisms and

the precautionary principle

d. social organization

i. small self-sustaining farms

ii. local markets

E. Callicot's analysis of Leopold

1. not a moral philosophy but a practical philosophy, How would the phronemos live?

2. The natural world is so complex and complicated that the human idea of mastery of it is just a form of hubris and will eventually be self-defeating

3. humans need to relate to the environment in a different way

4. however, Callicot says, it the beginning Leopold

he says in the beginning that love etc precedes moral

behavior

5. David Hume and late Darwin -- argued that the basis for morality is feeling or sentiment,

6. moral laws, the sphere of moral behavior is articulated on the basis of natural human feelings.

7. for Darwin this is natural and evolutionary, communities organized around love, intimacy, respect for the other survived.

8. For both morality has a natural basis. Callicot argues that Leopold is saying that modern society has lost this natural feeling of love and sympathy for the natural world--need new image -- complexity, sympathy

9. did western society ever have it

10. summary:

a. moral standing: the community as a whole

i. species and ecosystems

ii. not necessarily individuals

b. basis for moral standing

i. member of the system

ii. system is basis

c. ought: to act toward system in terms of its

stability

d. social organization: small farms

IV. I. Deep Ecology

A. Deep ecology believes that something has been lost in the modern western world

1. to modern consciousness

2. to modern forms of thinking

B. The loss is the wisdom that comes with "deep experience"

1. experience that orients us to other humans and

the natural world

2. "enlightenment" in Buddhism, satori in Zen Buddhism,

wu wei in Taoism, Hozho (Beauty Way of Life in Dine)

C. The goal of deep ecologists is to point the way to recovery

of this, ecological consciousness

D. The sources of de are many, Leopold, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, Taoism, Martin Heidegger's critique of western society, Native American traditions, Romanticism

E. What they have in common is this idea of a lost or forgotten experience

1. limits of scientific knowledge

2. wisdom of experience

II. There are two essential parts to this way of thinking -- a negative and a positive.

A. Deconstruct the dominant world view and its consequences

B. philosophy that will lead to ecological consciousness

III. Dominanat world view and its consequences

A. Lord of the Earth

1. humans qualitatively unique and at the top of

the hierarchy

2. natural world is standing reserve

a. a resource to be used

b. simply a means

3. science and technology give man the power to

transform the natural world

4. man can predict and control the consequences of

his transformations

5. other cultures inferior, other beliefs superstition

B. This leads to, or presupposes a separation of man and

nature

1. separation is main problem

a. illusion or maya

b. destructive and self-destructive

II. Ecological consciousness

A. Self-realization

1. separation of man and nature as given rise to

an extremely narrow conception of self

a. Tanha in Buddhism

i. narrowly self-interested self

ii. small i, small s

iii. easily swayed by conventions

b. self is alienated from what it truly means

to be human

c. goal of self realization is to take us beyond

this narrow experience of the self

2. Getting beyond involves identification with wider

set of relationships, other people, and the natural

world

3. Once one begins to identify with other beings and

places one overcomes the separation

4. self-realization leads to the realization of the self

a. as embedded in larger web of relationships,

human and natural

b. identifies on a vital level

c. I is more than body, and more than possessing

d. Australian aborigines and the Walkabout

e. "this place is part of myself" or "my relation

to this place is part of myself"

5. in Hindu Brahman is Atman

6. Once one experiences oneself, or identifies one's self

with others, transforms one's consciousness, and

therefore one's actions

7. Bhodisattava"No one is saved until we are all saved," where the phrase "one" includes not only me, and individual human, but all humans, whales, grizzly bears, whole rain forest ecosystems, mountains and rivers, the tiniest microbes in the soil, and so on, the Buddha

a. is the ideal of Mahayana ideal, "one whoe essence (sattva) is perfiected wisdom (bodhi),

b. "a being who having brought himself to the brink of Nirvana, voluntarily renounces his prize that he may return to the world to make it accessible to others.

c. Bodhisattva vows not to desert this world "until the grass itself be enlightened." The Buddha's Flower Sermon, "He simply held aloft a golden lotus."

8. To come to the Self-realization involves the process of self-identification with the larger whole, Nature. Must be identification in order for there to be compassion, sympathy, empathy.

9. Other cultures

a. Taoism

b. Navajo

10. Gandhi"turn the spotlight on yourself"

a.

b.

B. Biocentric Equality

1. self-realization involves a larger set of relationships

2. living things are part of self

3. This would mean in western terms that all organisms and entities in the ecosphere, as parts of the interrelated whole, are equal in inherent worth,

II. Eight Principles: (203)

A. The well-being and flourishin of human and nonhuman Life on Earth have value in themselves These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes

B. richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the raelization of these values and are also values in themselves

C.Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs

D. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with substantial decrease in human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease

E. present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening

F. Policies must therefore be changed These policies affect basic economic, technological structures. The resutlting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.

G. the ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great

H. ETHICS : those who subscribe to the forgoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes

How does this translate into action? The idea of biocentric equality and the eighth principle translate into the idea of what is called "direct action" which is "non-violent" the principle of non-violence is derived from the identifiction with all things living and non-living

Ghandi satyagraha -- soul power

III. ECOLOGICAL RESISTANCE -- CENTRAL PRINCIPLE

A.DIVERSITY BOTH HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL -man as a part of the whole takes personally the wounds inflicted on the body

B. resistance is necessary because of the dominance and limitations of narrow technological solutions to narrowly defined technological problems

C. the resister accepts the burden of responsibility, the burden of witnessing for the other as Self -- always non-violence -- can choose action or not, but cannot turn away in ignorance

D. embrace your opponent, convince him at the personally level of the justness of your position. Not a question of force, control, or manipulation. Thou art That. This is Hinduism and Ghandi, but the same in Taoism -- the power of one's position is the truth of that position, not one's ability to coerce