“Axe in Hand”, Aldo Leopold

“Preserving Wildness”, Wendell Berry

*The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, but He is no longer the only one to do so—*

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County almanac, and sketches here and there*.(p.67)

From the *very* first line of text, Aldo Leopold reminds readers of the dominance of divine functions that create or destroy (68). The advancement of technology gave earlyman the axe and the shovel to employ as tools (67) Use of these tools have allowed Leopold, a wielder of the axe to write “his signature on the face of the land” (68)

Stewardship is the constant effort to reduce our impact on the environment, a slight alternative, yet equivalent to Berry’s: “the responsible use of nature” (517)

Both Leopold and Berry employ stewardship, while struggling with sustainability in a new ecological model. However, in this brief analysis,

I argue they do it in very different ways. Leopold emphasizes the need to carefully exercise our divine functions, and Berry suggests careful stewardship of the value of the land.

Wendell Berry, due to his own “manner of thinking and philosophy—which knows that all men, by what they think about and wish for, in effect wield all tools” (Leopold 68) suggesting that he is forever a wielder of an axe and shovel. When presented with a choice between “nature extremist’s” and “technology extremist”, he is forced to side with the nature extremists. This is due to the inescapable fact of human perspective. However, mankind is homocentric in nature, this side does not exist: “but this choice seems poor, even assuming that it is possible” (Berry 517) Therefore, this places him back in the center of the battle between Ecocentrism and anthropocentrism.

On page 529, Berry notes “humans should learn to behave properly with respect to nature so as to place their domestic economy harmoniously upon and within the sustaining and surrounding wilderness ” and that is “how the branches intertwine ” and tie the knot between Mother Nature’s “respectable husbanding” (Berry 517) and the Lord’s “signature on the face” of Leopold’s land.

Through Mother Nature’s gift of a *particular tool*, it appears as if I have finally reconciled Leopold’s stewardship, and given a sustainable balance to Berry without breaking the fundamental rules present in both essays. I conclude Leopold and Berry take two distinct paths, they ultimately equally value the land.

Now, I must attempt to interject Leopold into the Wendall Berry’s governing laws.I still must meet the challenge of examining Berry’s possible actions, perspective or motivations. According to Berry, it is vital that I consider the possibilities available to me and the provisions, as well as assistance granted me by nature (Berry,525).

“I always cut the birch to favor the pine” (Leopold pg. # sixty-nine)

More often than not he lacks just a dime.

“If I . . . rub the pine [and give the] terminal buds . . . a wind” (Leopold sixty-nine)

More often than not we can see the divine. Just think of this, as my “wasteful time”.