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A Critical Essay on

Wendell Berry’s *“Preserving Wildness”* and

Aldo Leopold’s *“A Sand County Almanac: Axe-in-Hand”*

From time to time again, humans attempt to preserve nature. This only results in reinforcing the ideology that humans are in fact, abusers of nature. In *“Preserving Wildness”*, Wendell Berry points out that it is simply not possible for humans to survive in a world fully independent of nature. Inversely this reinforces the long known fact that humans are in a way, parasites, and our host of course is Mother Nature. It makes no difference to the wild mushroom growing on the side of a tree as to whether its existence harms, or replenishes the tree. But if that very tree is struck by lightning, the mushroom shall face its ultimatum and the universe in which it knows; becomes threatened.

Berry claims that it is a natural tendency for humans to be self-centered, and indeed it is a rare occurrence in which one ventures out of a self-centered universe. Yet still we continue to face problems imposed by nature and its resources. In order for all that is Nature to exist in harmony, we must diverge from our homocentric tendencies and take on an unfamiliar foreign perspective. This holds true for even if we remain self-centered or biased in nature.

The most inquisitive part about mankind however is that we never seem to stop searching for answers. For as long as we search for answers to mankind problems, Nature in the end will transform respectively into an equally bigger problem. And when we solve any given nature problem, it too will cause an unpredictable spiral effect that just never seems to end, nor did we see it start. We have no clue what the consequences are of solving big world problems, yet we continue to put forth the effort just because it is hard coded into our genes. Our ancestors, whoever they may have been all had one thing in common. They created a stockpile of problems and then left them behind for future generation’s to solve. The unfortunate fact is that regardless of our actions, the same will happen.

Leopold however, views the problem from a perspective that doesn’t require him to make a living off the land. I think that if Leopold had to live only off nature his concern amongst the price of timber: “The pine will ultimately bring ten dollars a thousand, the birch two dollars” (Leopold pg. 69) and other factors will continue to add towards his bias. According to Leopold, “We classify ourselves into vocations, each of which either wields some particular tool, or sells it, or repairs, or sharpens it, or dispenses advice on how to do so” (Leopold Pg. 68) and by doing this, “we avoid responsibility for the misuse of any tool save our own” (Leopold Pg. 68) Leopold’s revelation stated that all men in effect, wield all tools. This led to the idea that questions whether or not it is even worthwhile to wield any tools at all.

Throughout his essay, Leopold tries to escape his bias towards birch trees. Through every attempt however, he can’t seem to help but show distaste for the pine tree. Leopold says that if it came down to choosing between a birch and a pine, he would always cut down the birch: “I always cut the birch to favor the pine” (Leopold pg. 68) By Leopold’s self ad Mittal of being biased towards birch and Berry’s direct narration that claims all people are self-centered we can safely argue that all men and women are living in self-centered universes, even when they are attempting not to be.

**Works Cited**

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