

# The Land Ethic and tourism: *Creating virtuous tourists as agents of sustainability*

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Sustainable tourism aims to achieve a balance between the needs of tourists, the environment, local people, and businesses – a situation complicated by the numerous ethical issues at play. In this paper we present an original account of the ethics of Aldo Leopold, as it unfolds in his classic work, *A Sand County Almanac*. We argue that prior interpretations failed to incorporate Leopold’s lynchpin *cultural harvest* idea into his larger ‘land ethic’, and that a proper understanding of the cultural harvest reveals how tourism and other recreational activities can drive a person’s ethical development. Ultimately, the land ethic helps us protect and nurture the most precious sustainability resource: human beings that value and respect the environment.

Keywords: sustainable tourism; ethical tourism; Aldo Leopold; land ethic; environmental ethics; moral psychology

## Introduction

Ethical values play an irremovable role in sustainability. Moral commitments and exhortations permeate the work that first popularized the idea of sustainable development – the World Commission on Environment and Development’s (1987) ‘Our Common Future’. This seminal document culminates in the call to action that “human survival and well-being could depend on success in elevating sustainable development to a global ethic” (p. 255). So too, awareness of ethical values forms a cornerstone of theorizing on sustainable tourism. From Hughes’ (1995, p. 49) shift from the “technical, rational and scientific” sustainable tourism approach to an “ethical response”, to Macbeth’s arguments that achieving sustainable tourism requires moving beyond the anthropocentric approach to a “nonanthropocentric living earth ethic” (2005, p. 964), and to Holden’s (2003) proposal for an ethics of stewardship, and Fennell’s recent explorations of anthropocentrism and animal welfare (2014), ethical considerations have never been far from the theory and practice of sustainable tourism.

Key ethical questions, however, remain un-explored. Contemporary scholars stress that the sustainable tourism discourse needs “to be re-visited philosophically and examined even more rigorously to get back to the ethical and moral imperatives that early sustainability advocates envisioned” (Jamal and Camargo, 2014, p. 12). Indeed, in the

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editorial of the first issue of *The Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Bramwell and Lane (1993, p. 3) challenged theorists to learn how tourists can, “develop a better understanding and respect for the places they visit and the culture of the people living there”. Responding to the call of Jamal and Camargo to interrogate the ethical dimensions of sustainable tourism, and aiming to furnish an answer to Bramwell and Lane’s important question, in this paper we employ the work of the philosophical father of modern environmentalism, Aldo Leopold, to show how tourism can be used to build human commitment to protecting other cultures, animals, and the land itself – how, in sum, we can use tourism to make sustainability sustainable.

Some readers will already be familiar with the work of Leopold. As one of the forefathers of the modern environmental movement, the tourism and ethics literature has regularly looked to Leopold for insight and argument (e.g. Fennell, 2000, 2006, 2009; Holden, 2003, 2005; Hollinshead, 1990; Hultsman, 1995; Lemelin & Smale, 2007; Macbeth, 2005; Shultis & Way, 2006). Famously, Leopold (1968) recast humans as plain members and fellow citizens of the land-community, rather than conquerors of it, and in so doing extended the ethical community from humans to animals, and ultimately to the land itself. Yet Leopold’s land ethic did not quarantine the environment – the wilderness – from all human interaction. While he evolved from his initially utilitarian beginnings, Leopold crafted his ethic through his lifelong activities of forestry and game management, and the activities of exploring, hunting, and fishing retained a vital space in Leopold’s ethic. Like these activities, tourism needs a flourishing local environment and, paradoxically, an active human population within that environment. Allowing this robust space for human activity, and speaking to social as well as environmental issues, Leopold’s ethic thus offers guidance with respect to economic and social sustainability, extending the applicability of his ethic beyond the context of purely nature-based and wilderness endeavours. Furthermore, Leopold himself helpfully spoke on issues relating to tourism, applying his ethical perspective sharply to the recreation pursuits of his day (Hollinshead, 1990). Summing up the potential importance of Leopold to the study of sustainable tourism, Fennell observed that the land ethic “stands as a first principle from which to plan and develop tourism in view of sustainability and the precautionary principle” (2009, p. 220).

While we endorse Fennell’s observation that the land ethic offers promise for informing sustainable tourism development, our focus in this paper lies elsewhere. For even as sustainable tourism research has been opening itself to ethical theory, moral philosophy itself has not been standing still. In the early to mid-twentieth century, moral philosophy focused primarily on theories about good consequences (such as utilitarianism, which says that morality requires creating the greatest possible amount of happiness in the world) and about proper actions (such as Kantian ‘deontology’, which prohibits certain actions, including lying and murder). Towards the end of the century, however, ethicists began returning to an ancient way of thinking about ethics, dating back to the dawn of western philosophy. This approach focuses on virtue – stable human character traits such as courage, wisdom, and benevolence. In virtue approaches, attention shifts from good consequences and right actions to the ideal human character, which

possesses the ingrained habits, emotional dispositions and ways of reasoning that together constitute human excellence (Hursthouse, 2013). As well as hearkening back to classic virtue theorists such as Aristotle, ethicists responded to these insights by invigorating existing ethical theories with a virtue-infused perspective, fusing these new understandings into, for example, Kantian and utilitarian theories. As with ethical thinking generally, this shift impacted Leopoldian scholarship. Increasing numbers of commentators argued that, rather than putting forward a goal-based or action-based ethic, Leopold's land ethic implies a fundamental change in moral perspective and character (Liszka, 2003; Shaw, 1997; Starkey, 2007). While the land ethic provides guidance on proper goals and actions, commentators argued its primary focus hones in on virtuous human character, and the need for humanity to expand its way of thinking and emotionally responding not only to other humans, but to animals, life, and the land itself. On this footing, Bill Shaw (1997) wove three specific virtues out of Leopold's ethic, providing environmentally infused versions of the core virtues of respect, prudence, and practical judgement. Developing this line of enquiry, in this paper we deepen the insights about human virtue and moral development resonant in Leopold's work, and explore how tourism can play a crucial consciousness-raising role.

To return, then, to Fennell. We can ask two questions of any ethic, especially a virtue-centred ethic. First, there is a question of *output*: what specific virtues does the ethic uphold, and what concrete practices, duties, concerns or entitlements do those virtues demand? Answering this output question applied to tourism, a sustainability ethic would mandate specific practices and priorities for tourists and tourism operations in a given context. This is Fennell's question about Leopold's land ethic, and it is an important one.

Second, however, and easily overlooked, lurks a question of *input*: what does the theory say about the creation of virtuous moral agents? Applied to tourism the input question asks not how we can make tourism sustainable, *but how tourism can make us sustainable*. That is, can tourism nurture and preserve in us arguably the most precious resource for continued sustainability in the long term, *viz.* the ingrained values and respect for people, life, and places that fuel and ratify our commitment to sustainability? Our interrogation of Leopold's land ethic, and our exploration of its ramifications for tourism, focuses on this second 'input' question. In describing the land ethic, of course we hint at the type of perspective it involves, at least insofar as the reader can appreciate the sustainable perspective the ethic lays down as an output. But we hope to convince the reader that the true richness Leopold's land ethic offers in the context of tourism resides less in specifying how we can make tourism sustainable, and more in how activities like tourism can deepen and extend our moral character, and so make us care about and respect the importance of sustainable social, economic, and environmental practices.

With this agenda set down, let us now turn to Leopold's classic work itself, *A Sand County Almanac*, written near the end of a life devoted to the proper management and appreciation of natural resources. After pioneering the field of wildlife management in the 1930s, Leopold turned his attention to a book for a general audience, exploring humanity's moral and aesthetic connection to nature. The resulting work became a classic

of environmental literature. The greater part of the *Almanac* comprises ‘shack stories’; that is, Leopold’s scattered anecdotes, discussions and ruminations on his bird-watching, farming, hunting, and ceaseless investigations of the wildlife of his sand-county farm. The book culminates in the philosophical essay *The Land Ethic*, where Leopold argues that human morality should continue its naturally expanding scope. As our ethic has progressed from one governing relations among individuals, to governing relations between the individual and their society, so too it must evolve to govern the relation between humanity and animals, plants, and the land itself. In his use of the term ‘land’, Leopold refers to entire ecosystems, from the predators at the top of the food chain down to the soil and water that cycle energy throughout the system. Leopold argues that human interdependence with the land requires reconceiving the moral relationship between the two, requiring a shift from narrow self-interested economic management to genuine respect for the land: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community,” he concluded, “It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (Leopold, 1968, p. 240).

In the next section, we outline the prevailing interpretation of Leopold, which we suggest comprises a *two-stage* moral psychology. The following section argues that a further stage is needed to incorporate Leopold’s ideas about the cultural harvest and its role in moral development. We then develop an account of the five elements of the cultural harvest, and illustrate how tourism incorporate these elements. The basic tourism activities thus emerge as potentially powerful sources of moral development. Of course, tourism offers perils as well as promises, and we reflect on ways tourism can fail to provide the cultural harvest and so fail to promote moral development.

### **Callicott’s ‘two-stage’ Leopoldian land ethic**

Leopold’s foremost interpreter, J. Baird Callicott, developed the orthodox interpretation of Leopold’s vision over a series of works (Callicott, 1987, 1999a, 1999b). Callicott reads Leopold as putting forward a naturalistic, sentiment-based ethic, in the tradition of Charles Darwin and David Hume (on the latter, see Welchman, 2009). Callicott’s Leopold advances what we term a *two-stage* theory of moral psychology, where the first-stage involves the budding ethical agent learning facts about their membership in a shared community, and the second-stage sees the agent progress to virtuous character and ethical behaviour.

In settling the bounds of a person’s community, the first-stage employs three distinct learned ideas. Recasting some of Callicott’s technical terminology, Leopold thinks the three ideas of ‘*ecosystem*’, ‘*evolution*’ and ‘*shared fate*’ drive the learner to acknowledge some entity falls within their community.

*Ecosystem* consists of the realisation that one functions, along with other entities, as part of a larger functioning whole (Callicott, 1987). In this context, Leopold describes the ‘land pyramid’ (1968). The web of life on our planet circulates energy from the sun throughout its system in an increasingly complex and diversifying fashion. Humanity, alongside every other species, takes its place in this circuit, playing its part in the movement of energy throughout the land pyramid. We are born into this system – this

ecosystem – and born to hold a particular place in its functioning. From the learned awareness of ecosystems arises the view that elements of the land are humanity’s partners and collaborators.

*Evolution* informs us that we share a genesis and ongoing history with other living creatures (Callicott, 1987). As Darwin showed, we are fellow travellers with other species in the grand procession of evolution – a process that had been going for billions of years before our species, and will continue for countless years into the future. As well as suggesting the idea of *fellow travellers* on a vast journey, the learned idea of evolution gives us the sense that we are not so unlike the other living creatures on our planet. Our shared genesis and journey allow us to relate to them – at least to some extent – as our kin.

*Shared fate* occurs when the wellbeing of a moral agent binds together with the wellbeing of some other entity (Callicott, 1987, 1999b). Relating to the ecological world around us, Leopold observed that humans inevitably interact with the natural world, that the natural world enjoys its own distinct health and wellbeing, and that collapses in the health of the natural world yield profound losses to human wellbeing. In key ways, for Leopold the frightening reality of shared fate, and the dawning realization of our ecological interdependency, generates the social urgency of the land ethic. The fact of interdependency drives us forward into an expanded ethical community and sustainable practices within it – just as has occurred before in human history, as wider human-to-human interdependence at once demanded and facilitated an increasingly cosmopolitan moral ethic (Quilley, 2009).

In the past, people have tried purely instrumental approaches to solving the problem of shared fate, aiming to preserve the functioning of the discrete parts of the land they perceived as materially and economically valuable. Such approaches, however, tend to fail in the long run. For example, filling in wetlands to make more farmland might disrupt ecosystems that benefited people in unforeseen ways (e.g. by purifying water). Truly wise – rational, collective and long-term – treatment of the land requires respecting the land for its own sake, as one would respect a member of one’s community (Callicott, 1987). This linking together of our two fates implies a search for symbioses: win-win solutions where interactions benefit both the person and the land. From the learned idea of shared fate, then, the land’s members come to be seen as allies and benefactors.

In sum, Leopold holds that, in the same way humans eventually realised they were bound into communities with other humans beyond their own family or tribe on the basis of the three learned ideas of community, so too present-day humans sense their communal bonds with non-human animals, and even the land itself. As this realisation dawns, the community expands, and the conceptual space for the moral considerability of the non-human world opens. This matters, Callicott explains, because the human animal is hard-wired to have its ‘social instincts’ attach to those entities the human perceives as being part of its community (Callicott, 1987, 1999a). These social instincts emerge at the second-stage of Callicott’s Leopoldian framework. Human’s (second-stage) moral relations to non-human entities arise because our sympathies naturally follow our (first-stage) perceptions of kinship. Callicott defends this through appeal to Darwinian

evolution, arguing that humans who treated their fellows decently would form groups that would better protect and provision their members, and thus flourish under natural selection (Callicott, 1987).

We employ Callicott's two-stage theory, so described, as a point of departure for our own interpretation of the land ethic, but with one general correction. Callicott pictures the resulting moral theory as an ecocentric *holistic* ethic; that is, an ethic focused on ecosystems as intrinsically valuable organic wholes, with the implication being that agents must ensure the integrity of the land as a whole, rather than respecting the individual entities (animals, plants) making up the land. While some commentators still see Leopold in holistic terms (e.g. Fennell, 2013), later Leopoldian scholarship disputes Callicott's conclusion (Domskey, 2008; Liszka, 2003; Norton 1995; Starkey, 2007). Rather than pursuing the wellbeing of a super-organism (arguably resulting in 'eco-fascism'), this non-holistic view of the land ethic requires ethical agents achieve proper respectful relations with their community members. Certainly, the idea of *ecosystem* helps us perceive humans as part of a larger, functioning whole. This realisation does not, however, demand a whatever-it-takes pursuit of that larger whole's organic wellbeing. Instead, the logic of Leopold's argument implies, as described above, that we appreciate other parts of the ecosystem as our partners and collaborators. Moral agents must nurture an ecosystem's balance, not for its own sake, but to ensure the wellbeing of its elements. Consider a comparison between ecological and human morality (Starkey, 2007). Leopold's ethic applies in the first instance to human inter-relations. Ethical agents come to understand all humans as part of their community, and so learn to treat others as potential kin, fellow travellers, and allies. These ethical agents might, of course, care for the city where those people reside, treasuring its myriad institutions, practices, and relationships that enable its population to flourish in cooperative interactions. But the fundamental object of the agent's care is those people, and the proper treatment and respect owed to them, rather than the intrinsic value of the city. The city draws its value from the 'bottom up' (Starkey, 2007). The identical point applies to the non-human community; Leopoldian agents must search for more symbiotic interactions with all community members, ensuring concern for the flourishing of each member. This focus on cooperative interactions also allows ordinary self-interest to have a place in human action; our respect for the environment shapes how we can pursue our self-interest, just as respecting other people's rights does. But we are not required to eradicate our human drives for activity and flourishing. Instead, we must direct them so that they are sustainable, and align with appropriate concern for all members of our enlarged community. In sum, moral agents must focus on sustainable interactions with other individual members of the community, rather than the untrammelled pursuit of the whole's perfection.

### **A new interpretation of Leopold's moral psychology: the 'three-stage' land ethic**

Doubtless, as a general matter, Callicott's explanation of morality enjoys substantial merits. His theory can connect to other, seminal works in the socio-biological explanation

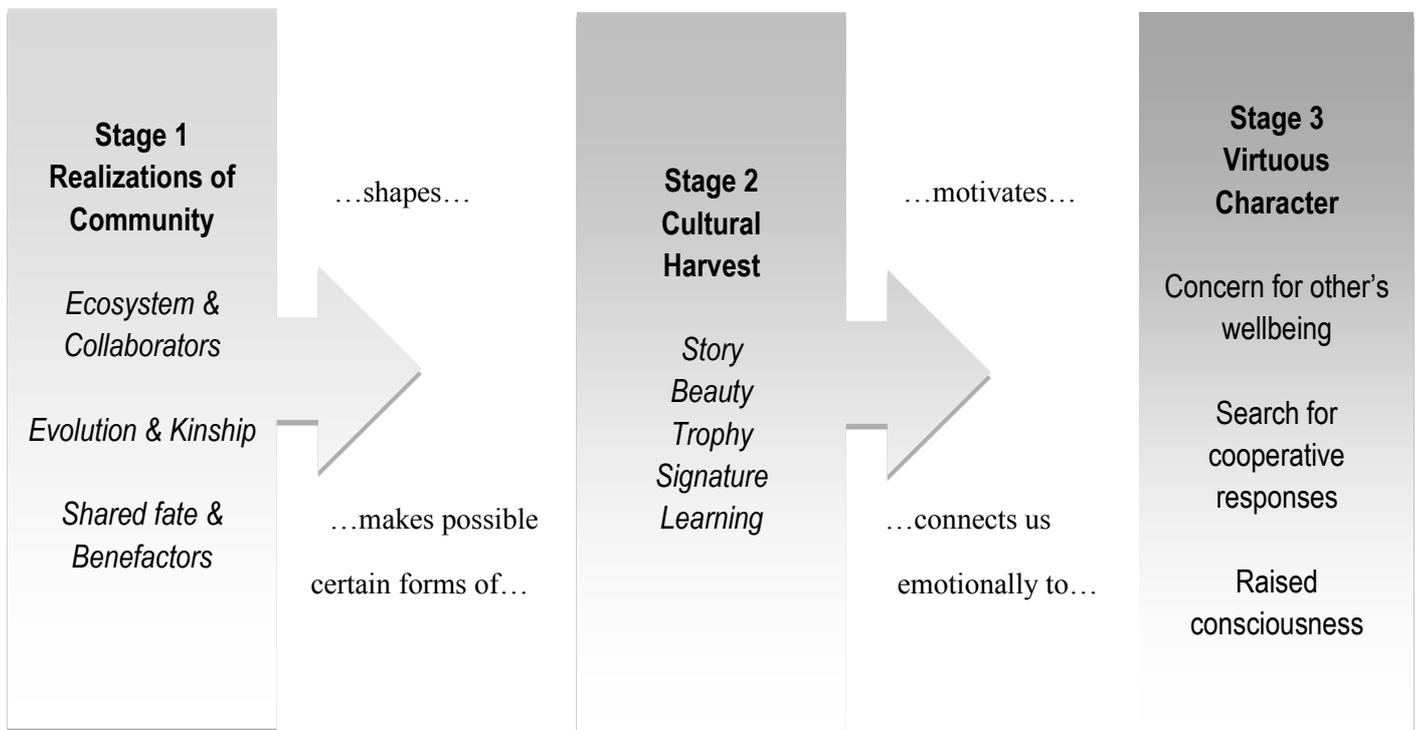
of morality, such as Hamilton's (1964) inclusive fitness and Trivers' (1971) reciprocal altruism. But in our view Callicott's account misses the full richness of Leopold's thinking and clashes with many claims Leopold made about human moral psychology; for example, that we "grieve only for what we know", that we cherish only what we "see and fondle", and that ethics are not "written" but must "evolve" (Leopold, 1968, pp. 48,101,241). All these claims imply that rational awareness of community cannot, in itself, forge the appropriate emotional connection with that community – more is required. As well, Callicott's account ignores the 'land aesthetic' and the 'cultural harvest', two ideas that permeate the *Almanac*.

With this in mind, this paper advances a three-stage Leopoldian theory. The *first-stage*, with Callicott, has science and reason expanding our awareness of the bounds of our community through the three learned ideas of ecosystem, evolution and shared fate. But rather than automatically impelling respectful moral concern, awareness of community merely opens a space for newly possible ways of thinking about and interacting with that community. At this *second-stage*, the awareness of community established in the first-stage shapes, enriches and makes possible what Leopold calls the 'cultural harvest'. The cultural harvest comprises the emotional and experiential harvest we can reap from nature: how our involvement and connection to the living world can enrich our own lives. This, after all, constitutes perhaps the most powerful and transformative theme shining through Leopold's entire corpus, the realization striking even the most casual reader of the *Almanac*: that a life lived not merely on the land, but *by* the land, was a life well-lived: a life like Leopold's, enriched, ennobled, informed, admirable, and enviable.

This enrichment occurs in many ways: ennoblement lurks in the stories we tell about the land, the way we learn about it, the sense of beauty and harmony that we discern within it, and the way we see our personalities reflected in our actions upon it. Only after these activities and engagements have taken place – only after we have seen and fondled, so to speak – do we proceed to the *third-stage* of virtuous character and proper behaviour. Awareness of community constitutes, in this three-stage approach, a necessary but not sufficient condition for moral considerability. It sets the conceptual boundaries of the moral domain, a domain then emotionally filled out by the cultural harvest that people reap from engaging with this larger community. As Leopold describes his project in the *Almanac*'s opening paragraphs:

That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics. That land yields a cultural harvest is a fact long known, but latterly often forgotten. These essays attempt to weld these three concepts (Leopold, 1968, p. ix).

The interpretation offered here follows Leopold in welding together these *three* concepts: the conceptual understanding of our expanded community, the cultural harvest we reap from our interactions with that community, and the moral action ultimately taken towards members of our community (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. The Three-Stage Model of Leopoldian Moral Psychology**

As Figure 1 describes, the first-stage provides us with the conceptual resources for including other entities as part of our community, and for understanding that we can pursue cooperative and even symbiotic interactions with them. The second-stage – framed by this understanding – welds us emotionally to others, making our connection to them a real part of our lives, activating our values, and altering our goals and personal identities. Once we engage this second-stage, we begin to progress toward the third-stage, where virtuous character and respectful moral conduct emerges.

Leopold's three-stage land ethic applies not just to land, ecosystems, and species, but also – indeed in the first instance – to people and animals. The learned ideas setting the bounds of our community have long facilitated our seeing foreigners as, in important respects, our kin, our fellow travellers, our partners and benefactors. And with other people as well as the land, the cultural harvest conspires to make that extended community emotionally real for us – driving us to change our behaviour towards them. As Leopold observed for humans, in drawing the analogy to the land: “A dead Chinaman is of little import to us whose awareness of things Chinese is bounded by an occasional dish of chow mein. We grieve only for what we know” (1968, p. 48).

Why does this addition of a second-stage of interaction, experience, and emotion improve Callicott's two-stage position? To some extent, Leopold's point here just

rehearses common sense. People plainly evince greater ethical concern for their nearest and dearest – those they know. In ethical theory, this insight forms the centrepiece of connectedness theories of responsibility, where tighter historical relations between two people or groups cement stronger moral responsibilities between them (e.g. Miller, 2007). In short, people relate more closely and care more deeply about places, peoples, and environments they have lived, breathed, and remembered.

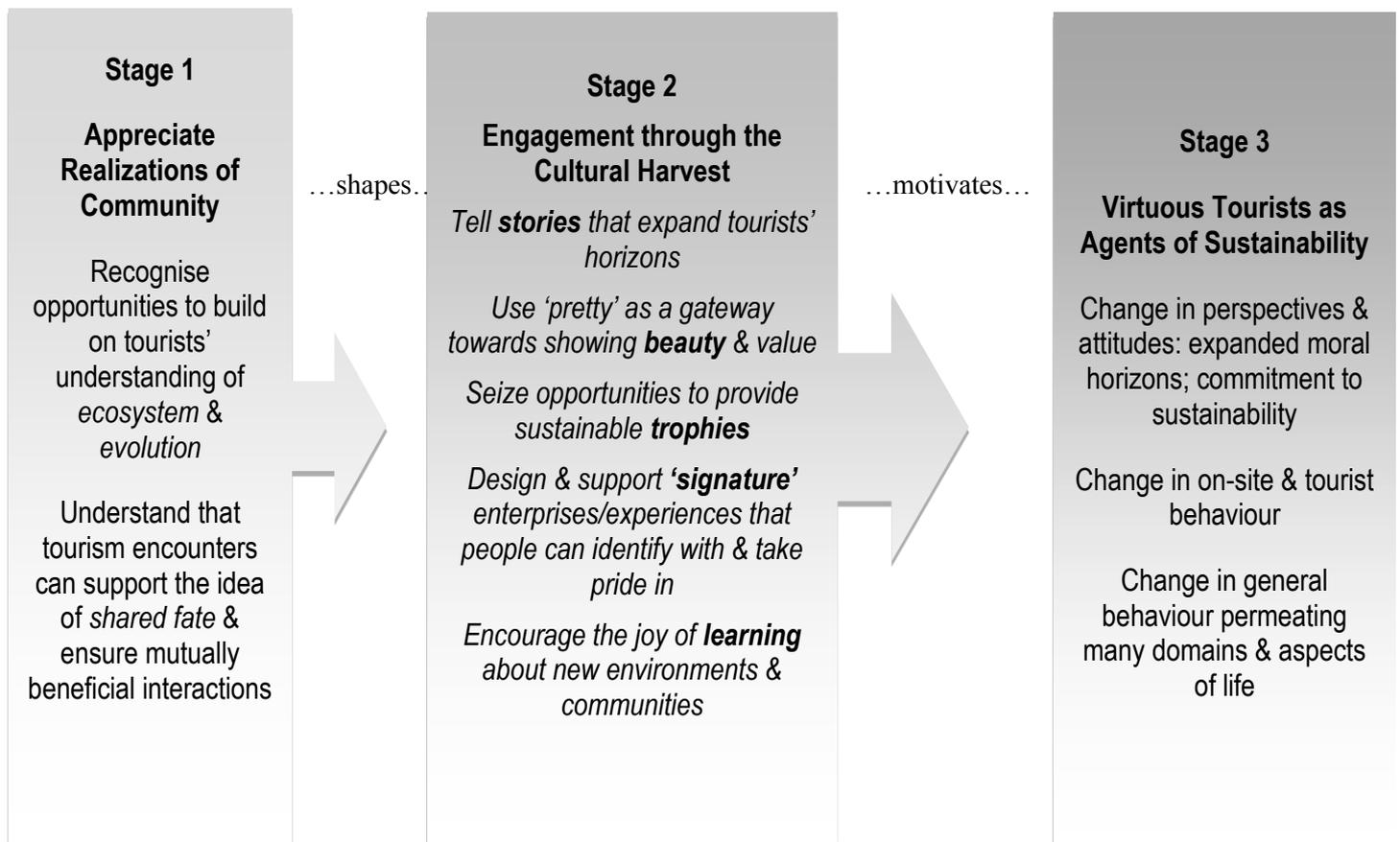
In the next section we will explore the cultural harvest in greater depth, but first we need to step back a moment and appraise this interpretation of Leopold. For because this interpretation highlights the human goods people can enjoy from full engagement with the environment, it might seem a rather ‘anthropocentric’ version of his theory. Now there are at least two ways an ethical theory can be anthropocentric. First, it can be anthropocentrically grounded (Welchman, 2009) because it describes an ethic *for human beings in particular* – as opposed to proposing an ethic for all rational creatures, for example, or an ethic aiming to capture a totally impartial perspective (the point of view of the universe, so to speak). Our interpretation of Leopold qualifies as anthropocentrically grounded; its notions of community and the engagements of the cultural harvest hinge on features of human emotions, character, and reason (Quilley, 2009). It constitutes an ethic about what humans owe to the life surrounding them, not about metaphysical value pre-existing in the world, irrespective of human perception.

The second way an ethic can be anthropocentric occurs if it mandates duties and entitlements that privilege humans over all other species and types of life (see Fennell, 2013, 2014). Both extremes on this dimension of anthropocentric privileging appear worrying. An ethic demanding all and only humans enjoy moral status seems arbitrary and unjustifiable. Leopold took aim at this view by arguing we humans are plain members of the ecological community. Equally though, an ethic *for humans* that does not give some priority *to humans* risks blundering into an ugly ethical fascism (Norton, 1995) and ignoring important moral lessons. For example, philosopher David Schmidtz (2012) argues that environmental ethicists fail to understand *human* ecology if they imagine that poor people will not do whatever it takes to feed their families. If our environmental ethic prohibits the poor from developing their way out of crushing poverty, then our theory’s misanthropy is rivalled only by its unfeasibility (Butcher, 2009 hammers home a similar point in the context of tourism ethics). For his part, Leopold sides with Schmidtz, acknowledging that wild things “had little human value until mechanization assured us of a good breakfast” (1968, p. vii). Ultimately, because Leopold’s land ethic builds out from the scaffold of a humanist ethic, the conceptual and emotional machinery driving respect for the land continues powering the pre-existing respect for other people. As such, the land ethic reforms rather than revolts against our previous humanistic ethics. It finds inherent value in animals, life, and nature itself, but still privileges humans to some extent, and so counts as mildly anthropocentric.

### **The importance of the cultural harvest to sustainable tourism and moral development**

So far, we have argued a missing link lies in the orthodox interpretation of Leopold: the

cultural harvest. This section explores the cultural harvest in some depth, describing each of its five elements: story; beauty and aesthetic appreciation; rarity and the hunt for trophy; signature and personality; and knowledge and learning. As we show, all these elements can be found in staple tourism activities. Tourism thus epitomizes the stage-two engagements that can pique people’s ethical sentiments, and propel them towards respecting an expanded moral community and achieving stage-three virtuous character. The basic tourism activity emerges as a potentially potent ethical enterprise (Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Three-Stage Model of Leopoldian Tourism – Creating Virtuous Tourists as Agents of Sustainability**

While we explain each element severally, splicing the cultural harvest into discrete elements does risk deflecting attention from the wholesale perspective shift Leopold’s work creates. Story, learning, beauty, trophy, and signature interweave through his myriad anecdotes and imaginings, cumulatively drawing the reader into a new worldview and a transformed understanding of a life well-lived. So while for explanatory clarity we divide our discussion into five distinct elements (and Leopold (1968) himself made similar typological divisions in the goods of recreation and wildlife activities), we must stress that all the elements intertwine and cross-pollinate. For instance, our learning about the land defines the trophies we take from it, enriches the stories we tell of it and the characters we perceive within it, and shapes the beauty we apprehend in it. The

learning element, then, propels us into further elements of the cultural harvest. (Indeed, this particular trajectory was, in some respects, the journey Leopold himself traversed over the course of his professional life. Initially, Leopold learned about the land for the purposes of utilitarian game management; but the more he learned and interacted with the land, the more his relationship deepened into one of genuine ethical respect.)

### **Story**

In this element of the cultural harvest, our stage-one ideas of community frame how a story can be understood and enjoyed. The story then engages our emotions, allowing us to identify with the protagonists, and feel their pains and joys as our own. Consider what converts a mere concatenation of discrete events into being a story, such as a tale of poetic justice. One crucial feature – arguably the crucial feature of all narratives – is the presence of a normative framework. In his searching analysis of the ‘narrative ethics’ of the *Almanac*, Liszka (2003) describes how the shack stories stimulate readers into Leopold’s moral worldview. This normative framework supplies the reader with the conceptual tools for understanding the stories Leopold tells. These conceptual tools include, for instance, the ideas that X and Y are kin or kind, that Y is the sort of entity that can be harmed, that what X did to Y was harm, that the harm to Y was unnecessary, and that ultimately the harm done by X redounds to X. These conceptual judgments set the scene for the audience perceiving the subsequent harm to X as just deserts – as possessing that pleasing irony of poetic justice. In this way, the identifications with characters that readers can make, fuelled by their notions of community, make the story possible *qua story*. The same holds for comedy, irony, tragedy – all these types of story pivot on prior understandings, including ideas of community, kinship and likeness, capacity for harm, and so on.

Liszka’s analysis of narrative ethics dovetails with our three-stage interpretation of the land ethic. The conceptual ideas and normative frameworks are set down by the stage-one learned ideas. The audience may already know these ideas, or they may be expounded within the story itself – Leopold’s narratives employ both devices. In combination with the stage-one ideas, the stage-two story engrosses our emotions and affections as we identify with the characters and processes Leopold narrates. In this way, when Leopold’s stories connect us with our likeness with animals, the emotional effect goes beyond mere amusement through imaginary anthropomorphism. For example, when Leopold compares land-ownership declarations by various local birds with human’s county office records, his juxtaposition carries home a deeper point and emotional connection regarding similar behaviours of similar species engaged in similar enterprises. To revel in the story requires incorporating the theme: stage-two cultural harvest goods impel stage-three changes to moral perception.

Tourism provides a key setting and opportunity to engage the tourist in the stories of the land and its people. To get inside and emotionally appreciate stories requires recognizing others as to some extent *like us*. Stories that take as protagonists others outside our immediate community tempt our emotional engagement to expand to this larger community. Nature offers numerous opportunities for tourists to experience stories

in the animal world; one can picture a dinosaur and her offspring chased by a Tyrannosaurus Rex, thanks to their ancient footprints in Bolivia. But tourism experiences extend beyond nature; numerous locations of human stories set the stage for tourism, including dark tourism locations (e.g. Ground Zero), genealogy locations (e.g. Scottish clan tours), and the homes, birthplaces or journeys of famous people (e.g. Mozart or Che Guevara). Even as these stories fascinate and enthrall tourists, the emotional engagement they provide feeds into the tourists' expanded moral perspective.

### ***Beauty and Aesthetic Appreciation***

In this element of the cultural harvest, aesthetic appreciation combines with ideas of community to help us appreciate objects of beauty (and the entities producing and sustaining such objects) as valuable and worth protecting. This element shines through in Leopold's shack stories. While one can appreciate nature's beauty without awareness of human community with the land, the stage-one learned ideas enrich and shape our aesthetic experience of nature. For example, awareness of evolution and ecosystems multiply the dimensions of aesthetic appreciation. We progress beyond merely appreciating the snapshot of nature before us, to appreciating its place in a larger process: not only what it *is* but what it *means*. Thus, we can appreciate the involute complexity of an ecosystem's balance, and the grandeur of the ancient process of evolution itself.

Does this appeal to aesthetic appreciation require all people possess a shared, cross-cultural understanding of beauty? We suggest humans share enough aesthetic characteristics that most people can, when appropriately primed and introduced to a new aesthetic realm, appreciate beauty according to that realm's standards (in the same way that a primer in classical art introduces a newcomer to the delights of visual art). While we may not be able to immediately perceive the beauty in another culture's dance or a strange geographical formation, immersion in the culture or study of the object empowers us to perceive the beauty.

Leopold's shack stories function in this way, helping the reader to delight in nature in all its beauty. He observes of his neighbours:

The drama of the sky dance is enacted nightly on hundreds of farms, the owners of which sigh for entertainment, but harbor the illusion that it is to be sought in theaters. They live on the land, but not by the land (1968, p. 34).

Engagement with this element of the cultural harvest occurs when we apprehend the beauty of nature or of other persons and cultures (e.g. their music and dance) – staples of tourism. Such engagement helps us to appreciate, respect, and value that object of beauty, in turn helping motivate our moral behaviour towards it.

It is no surprise that many people find tourism destinations beautiful! Destinations overflow with numerous elements of beauty – the idyllic tropical island, a grand vista, the wave of a smiling local, the bright night-lights of a city skyline, or the reverence of a sacred place. At tourism's international level, protection occurs through the UNESCO's World Heritage List. The list requires "Outstanding Universal Value" and one of its ten selection criteria is: "to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional

natural beauty and aesthetic importance” (UNESCO, 2011, pp. 21-22). As a result, these unique attractions can be significant tourism destinations, drawing tourists into this element of the cultural harvest.

### ***Rarity and the Hunt for Trophy***

The third element of the cultural harvest invokes two very human attributes: fascination for rarity and a desire to hunt for trophies. The latter links with the former, for the rarest objects and experiences furnish the most sought-after trophies. Trophies need not be physical: any enduring record of a personal achievement or special experience that we take away with us counts as a trophy in this sense. And the importance lies less in the trophy itself, than in the practices of pursuing it; as Leopold reflects after narrating a memorable encounter catching trout: “What was big was not the trout, but the chance. What was full was not my creel, but my memory” (1968, p. 40; see also List, 1997). In his essay on ‘The Conservation Esthetic’, Leopold (1968, pp. 168-69) explains the significance of trophies:

The pleasure they give is, or should be, in the seeking as well as in the getting. The trophy, whether it be a bird’s egg, a mass of trout, a basket of mushrooms, the photograph of a bear, the pressed specimen of a wild flower, or a note tucked into the cairn on a mountain peak, is a *certificate*. It attests that its owner has been somewhere and done something – that he has exercised skill, persistence, or discrimination in the age-old feat of overcoming, outwitting, or reducing to possession.

One might think though, as Hollinshead suggests in his searching review of Leopold on recreation, that the yearning to claim trophies will rankle Leopold’s ecological consciousness (1990, p. 375). But here, as elsewhere throughout Leopold’s thought, the enriched awareness of community shapes but does not sunder the core human drives. Trophy-hunting remains an abiding part of Leopold’s engagement with the land – game-hunting stories cheerfully infuse the *Almanac*. But his experience with the land transformed the type of trophies he treasured and the appropriate standards governing such practices (List, 1997). For example, some types of hunting Leopold wholly rejected, such as killing those vital predators at the pinnacle of the food chain – remorse for shooting a wolf in his younger days still haunts his writing. Other hunting he has mitigated out of ecological concern: “No one would rather hunt woodcock in October than I,” he reflects, “but since learning of the [woodcock’s] sky dance I find myself calling one or two birds enough” (1968, p. 34). But increasingly he lauds the most sustainable trophies, such as his pursuit of the songs of the most hidden and hermetic birds, and he draws a clear distinction between the sustainability of pursuing trophies such as photos and experiences, as opposed to other types of hunting and collecting (Leopold, 1968).

As Leopold understood, tourism activities allow people to pursue and capture the rareness and wonder of the world around them. Linking beauty with rarity and achievement, Todd (2009, p. 167) observes that “Wonder lies partly in encountering the new and the strange, and in the sheer difficulty and effort involved in doing so”. Todd (2009) also highlights the worrisome situation where tourism development makes such

special experiences more accessible, thereby eliminating the challenging attribute of the experience, and potentially endangering its appeal. Todd's observation mirrors Leopold's own deprecations against the recreation movement of his time (Hollinshead, 1990; List, 1997). He lambasted the peculiarly pointless enterprise of hunting for trophies effectively delivered to the tourist; for example, where industries artificially breed trout in streams so that anglers can enjoy a facile sense of fulfilment in catching them. But facilitating access to tourism sites need not eliminate trophy status; it merely changes the number and/or extent of the trophies. Compare the experiences offered to tourists for their first sighting of Machu Picchu. One option sees us waking in a hotel room before boarding the bus full of tourists for the twenty minute ride up the mountain to the internationally-renown Machu Picchu, another finds us booking months ahead for a 'daily quota' ticket to trek the Peruvian mountains for three days on the Inca Trail, decamp in the early hours to reach the Gate of the Sun for sunrise over the 'lost city' and explore Machu Picchu before the 'tourist' buses arrive.

The burning desire for appropriating rarity can impel tourists into learning and engaging with diverse ecologies, animals and people, treasuring such things because we carry memories and mementos of them. But (perhaps even more than the other cultural harvest elements) trophies remain an ethically two-edged sword. When tourism makes rarer experiences accessible to meet the demands for the trophies, this impacts on exotic species and fragile environments. The key question focuses on the tourists' intrinsic motivations – do they seek only the trophy? Or do they truly appreciate *why* their experience is rare and special? (Fennell, 2000; Lemelin & Smale, 2007). Trophy-hunting at once promises a powerful second-stage way of engaging tourist's desires and identities, and at the same time potentially threatens to violate third-stage virtues of protecting and respecting animals, wilderness, and exotic cultures (see Fennell, 2013).

### ***Signature and Personality***

These examples of trophy hunting and the quest for rare experiences segue into the fourth element of Leopold's cultural harvest – the way we record our personality through our interactions with nature:

A conservationist is one who is humbly aware that with each stroke he is writing his signature on the face of his land. Signatures of course differ, whether written with axe or pen, and this is as it should be (Leopold, 1968, p. 68).

Other elements of the cultural harvest – style, knowledge, taste, and aesthetic sensibility – extend beyond our thoughts and actions; we concretize them in our dealings with nature. As Leopold's shack stories reveal, the land and people's interactions with it tell stories about its prior owners while they live, and long after they die – stories that may be read by others. For this reason, the impact that we have on the natural world inscribes an enduring record of our relationship with our community. In carving down our individual response to the land, our impact fuels our feelings of investment and identification with the land. We come to recognize the land as our own – a living reflection of our choices, actions, and identity. Where and how we mark the land demonstrates what type of person

we are, just as a style of dress or a work of art communicates our personality. Our mark declares whether we understand the aesthetic in question: style in clothes, form in art, beauty in the land. Our legacy determines our status as planter, sculptor, steward, or artist, and the enduring record of this status inscribed into the face of the land allows appraisal and appreciation by our social peers (Leopold, 1968; Quilley, 2009). Signatures differ – but some can be cause for shame and embarrassment, even as others furnish their authors with pride and achievement.

In a way, signature mirrors trophy. In each of these two cultural harvest elements we find a sense of ownership over the land – ‘ownership’ not in the sense of commodification, but rather of incorporation, commitment, and investment. In trophy we take something from the land into us and call it our own; in signature we take something of ourselves and put it into the land, recognizing ourselves in it and feelings others’ appraisals of the land as judgements about our own character and life.

As always, awareness of our community with the land transforms how we want to write our signature. Holding in mind the community ideas of evolution and ecosystem, for example, we can consider what imprint human existence as a whole makes on the evolutionary process (e.g. on biodiversity), and what that footprint says about us as a species.

Capturing this element of signature, many have long-known that tourism choices and behaviour are expressions of our personality. As Plog (1974) highlighted, some tourists prefer a safe destination with a familiar accommodation provider, while others seek to discover new experiences that communicate to the world their leadership and adventurous nature. Tourism operators recognise, and capitalize on, these desires. Recent trends involve undertaking conscious or responsible tourism, and for tourists to match their signature with their tourism choice. In this context, Gardner (2010) invokes Simon Sinek’s broader principle, ‘People don’t buy *what* you do, they buy *why* you do it’. Increasingly mission statements of tourism providers mirror this principle, such as Wilderness Safaris (2012):

We are a responsible ecotourism and conservation company. The reason we exist is to protect pristine wilderness areas and the flora and fauna – or biodiversity – that they support. We believe that in protecting these areas, and including the local communities in this process, we will make a difference to Africa and ultimately the world.

### ***Knowledge and Learning***

“Every farm woodland, in addition to yielding lumber, fuel, and posts,” Leopold tells us, “should provide its owner a liberal education. This crop of wisdom never fails, but it is not always harvested” (1968, p. 73). Leopold’s work portrays a dazzling capacity for the discovery of the extraordinary through the surveying of the ordinary. Like Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes, Leopold reads off the information on history and character that lies within the view – but beyond the perception – of ordinary people. From determining the home range of local animals, to the year where a long-forgotten farmer abandoned his cottage, to the hidden hunting spots of a local swamp, Leopold reads the land like a

library. When he compares mowing weeds to burning history books, his own examples of learning throughout the *Almanac* bind moral force to the tongue-in-cheek accusation (1968). The ‘weeds’ are rare native plants – descendants of a lineage now almost forgotten. Unknowingly, the diligent weeder torches irreplaceable libraries.

As the *Almanac* exemplifies, learning can become its own source of excitement and satisfaction, and new discoveries the most prized trophies. The land presents us with an almost infinite challenge to learn, where each discovery opens more questions. And the more we learn, the more we stumble into other elements of the cultural harvest, especially the aesthetic and the story of the land. As Leopold (1992, p. 337) famously recounted, in tying together learning, the cultural harvest and third-stage virtuous action: “Once you learn to read the land, I have no fear of what you will do to it, or with it. And I know many pleasant things it will do to you”.

Tourism possess an array of learning opportunities and methods. First, many tourism settings provide *interpretation* as the basis for the tourist’s learning experience. This interpretation “can assist people to build relationships with or understand interrelationships between what they are observing or experiencing at the site and their lives” (Ham & Weiler, 2006, p. 3). Second, recognising that tourism learning occurs outside formal education systems, researchers and practitioners have considered the learning experience from the perspective of free-choice learning (Falk, Heimlich & Foutz, 2009). Third, many scholars distinguish ‘ecotourism’ from related types of tourism, such as nature-based tourism, precisely because of this element of learning (Baral, Stern & Hammett, 2012; Fennell, 2001).

### **Tourism without the Cultural Harvest**

Of course, tourism offers perils as much as promises. Many tourism experiences link only loosely with the stage-one ideas of community, or only weakly engage the stage-two elements of the cultural harvest, and so do not create significant shifts in ethical behaviour. Specifically, tourism can fail to play its full role in people’s ethical journey in two ways.

The first way the ethical journey may be stymied occurs when there is no framing by stage-one notions of community. This breakdown between stage-one awareness and stage-two engagement may happen inadvertently; for example, when a tourist arrives in a new location and enjoys a seafood delicacy that is promoted by the restaurant but is in fact an endangered species.

However, the disconnect may not be accidental. Demonstrating that not all tourists, and even operators, are concerned with the wellbeing and fate of ‘fellow travellers’ is the ongoing need to address child exploitation in tourism. Despite over fifteen years of work by the UNWTO World Tourism Network on Child Protection, combatting ‘child labour, sexual exploitation and trafficking of children’ remains one of the five priorities of the UNWTO Ethics and Social Dimensions of Tourism Programme (UNWTO, 2014).

Failure can also be driven by industry, despite the best intentions of the tourist. Direct exploitation or harm of the tourists can completely undermine the crucial idea of

shared fate. If tourists are threatened or manipulated into opening their wallets, then the harsh reality forecloses the conceptual opening of a sense of community. Zero-sum interactions, where one side profits only by the other side's loss, replace cooperative and symbiotic interactions. In such a case, the possibility of shared fate collapses and with it any possibility of ethical progression.

The second way the ethical journey may be stymied occurs when stage-one might be present, but without emotional engagement from stage-two's cultural harvest. Consider the limited opportunity for connection when a tour operation presents its tourists with only *pretty* views, commonly through a short stop for a photographic snap from a lookout before reboarding the tourist bus. Such a case furnishes less of the deep emotional connection attending the apprehension of beauty, and hence only limited progression towards stage-three ethical life. (Though as we note below, it may nevertheless prove an important first step.) Arguably, tourists will first apprehend the most visible prettiness – or Todd's (2009) *picturesque*; however, more refined and subtle appreciation emerges the more the tourist knows and appreciates the nature and aesthetic standards applicable to the object in question. "Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty," observed Leopold (1968, p. 96), "It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language". This deeper appreciation inspires the tourist to perceive the object as intrinsically valuable and worth protecting. We can think of *slow food* and the resultant *slow tourism* movement, as supporting this insight by promoting travel at a slower pace for longer, while engaging, exploring, and connecting with the richness of the destination experiences (Dickinson, Lumsdon & Robbins, 2011).

Here we must deflect a potentially misleading impression. This prioritization of ideas of community and the deep emotional engagement resonant in the cultural harvest might seem to imply the land ethic will prize only the most intimate and ecological tourism ventures. Our earlier discussion of the notion of 'signature' and of how tourist choices can reflect our personality and moral identity might underscore this impression. If so, the land-ethic-infused tourist ethos might appear as a species of what Butcher (2003, 2009) calls 'new moral tourism', which styles tourist activities as a sombre ethical mission carried out by moral elites. But we want to resist this conclusion. Like Leopold's pursuits throughout the *Almanac*, tourism must remain enjoyable (and enjoyable for all people), tapping into the deepest human desires of curiosity, wonder, drama, achievement, and even plain-old-having-fun. Certainly, local, small-scale ecotourism enterprises often will be best placed to introduce tourists to a unique local culture and environment, and these destinations will attract the connoisseurs of the cultural harvest (though even here, impact per person can be less in a larger group). However, even mass tourism enterprises can fare better and worse according to the land ethic's metric. Indeed, for many people, mass tourism may be the best way for them to take the first important steps into a larger moral community. For the committed ecotourist, a trip to a Caribbean Island might offer little prospect for moral development, but such a vacation may be an important step in opening the eyes of a more conservative and inexperienced tourist to the wonders of the wider world. Likewise, while a slow tourism encounter may remain the ideal, for a time-poor tourist with financial, health or physical constraints, a package

tour holiday to a different country will compare favourably (from the perspective of the land ethic) to the alternative of sitting at home in front of the television. As such, in terms of moving forward through the second-stage of ethical development, appropriately designed mass tourism may be as important for sustainability as the more vivid cases of small, community-based ecotourism.

## Conclusion

We have argued that Leopold's moral philosophy carves out a special moral place for activities like tourism. If the cultural harvest does indeed play a powerful role in emotionally expanding the compass of our moral community, then the stage-two ennoblement redolent in tourism becomes significant not merely by adding richness to human life, but by propelling us towards achieving a full moral perspective – towards human virtue itself.

In our argument we have perforce dealt with individual cases and examples only briefly. Future research could deal with specific cases in depth, applying the land ethic to explore the promises and perils of specific tourism sites and experiences. Because the land ethic is a naturalistic ethic, we can empirically test many of its claims. Quantitative research could refine many of the broad philosophical claims we have made, and enhance the prospects for implementation, by investigating such questions as: How significantly do people who engage in sustainable tourism actually alter their moral and ecological views and actions? Are some types of tourists more likely to be affected than others? Is each of the five elements of the cultural harvest equally important in changing perspectives? Can each element succeed in progressing moral development on its own, or is a combination of the elements necessary?

In conclusion, we must stress that, as always, any philosophical argument includes a standing invitation to further reflection from other perspectives. Leopold's land ethic remains one among many important alternative moral theories of sustainability, and while the account we have provided of his work aims to deflect many of the major challenges marshalled against the land ethic, we cannot pretend to have answered every important objection or remaining challenge (Domskey, 2006; Welchman, 2009), and in our focus on 'input' issues of moral development, we have left unresolved hard questions regarding the output of the moral theory (e.g. on whether the ethic can vindicate respect for endangered species as well concern for their members: see Fennell, 2013). That said, even if the reader feels keenly the attraction of one or other of these alternative theories, we submit that Leopold's insights about the cultural harvest's capacity to ingrain expanded human concern for others could still be drawn upon as a vital cog in inculcating sustainable ethical values. After all, no-one can doubt that *A Sand County Almanac* succeeded in drawing thousands of people into love of the land – the book constitutes the founding document of the modern environmental movement. As such, we should all agree that its rich combination of conceptual ideas (such as of community and resemblance) and of practices engaging our emotions and firing our minds (the cultural harvest) proved a powerful device for changing people's perspective and relationship towards the land. If that is right, then tourism can hope to play a similar role, and hence of contributing to the

creation of virtuous tourists capable of becoming agents of sustainability.

In particular, Leopold's cultural harvest alerts us to the internal moral tension of tourism, which Leopold expressed in the particular context of wilderness: "all conservation of wildness is self-defeating, for to cherish we must see and fondle, and when enough have seen and fondled, there is no wilderness left to cherish" (1968, p. 101). In the terms we employed earlier, tourism forever plays out a clash between the input and output questions we can ask of ethical theories. 'Output' describes how the ethical theory says people should behave: what they should respect and express concern for, and what this means in concrete terms. 'Input' describes the conditions and practices humans need to become and remain virtuous in the first place. If we are correct that tourism yields the cultural harvest, then tourism presents at once as a site for ethical development (on the 'input' side) as well as a locus of moral concern (on the 'output' side). Eschewing activities such as tourism and recreation is not a desirable option – for it imagines we can move directly from stage-one to stage-three. Tourism thus epitomizes the more general tension Leopold's ethical agents must navigate: the need to find ways to see and fondle without destroying or polluting.

The cultural harvest, in conclusion, reminds us that we need to consider not only what sustainability requires, but also what sustains sustainability. The more we become seized by the later consideration, the more we will agree with Leopold (1968, pp. 176-77) that, "Recreational development is a job not of building roads into lovely country, but of building receptivity into the still unlovely human mind."

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