

Mainstream Eco Tourism: Are we pushing the right buttons? Insights from Environmental Ethics

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Outline

- The reality - & the opportunity
- Aldo Leopold's *The Land Ethic*
 - Callicott and the 2 stage approach
 - Adding 'Cultural Harvest' stage
- The Cultural Harvest & Tourism
- Implications for ecotourism
- Next research stage



Redefining best practice

- Managing parks is a broad challenge with a wide array of responsibilities and priorities.
- While tourists are one of these priorities, there are limited resources allocated to tourism and recreation activities.
- There is recognition that there are benefits from having tourists in the park. The park experiences can affect tourists' attitudes and behaviour – both within the park and more broadly on their return home.
- Given these priorities, objectives and constraints, how can park managers 'push the right buttons' to get the best outcomes? How can insights from environmental ethics help redefine best practices?





An original account of the ethics of Aldo Leopold

- Leopold set down his ethical position in his 1949 *A Sand County Almanac* – a classic of the modern environmental movement. Its capstone is the philosophical argument provided in *The Land Ethic*.
- Our account of Leopold's work highlights a little-noticed aspect of his thinking – and one with great implications for tourist experiences and moral development: the 'Cultural Harvest'.




Existing Thinking on Leopold

Callicott developed a naturalistic ethic from Leopold's writings, where Leopold put forward three 'learned ideas' of community:

1. **Ecosystem:** humans are one part of a larger complex system: the biosphere or 'Land Pyramid'. We play our role in its functioning, as do other life forms.
 - Other life is conceived as our partners or collaborators.
 2. **Evolution:** we share a genesis and ongoing history with all other life on Earth. We are related to them, and hence not unlike them.
 - Other life is conceived as our kin and 'fellow travellers'.
 3. **Shared Fate:** the Land around us has its own health and wellbeing – with which our fate is indissolubly linked. A narrowly instrumental approach to the Land has not proven effective.
 - Other life is conceived as our allies, symbiotes and benefactors.
- These ideas of community matter because human beings' 'social instincts' (developed through evolution) attach them to those they perceive as being in their community.

The Two Stage Approach



**Realizations of
Community**

Ecosystem

Kinship

Shared Fate

Ethical Life

*Respect for other's
wellbeing*

Search for symbiosis

*'Raised
Consciousness'*

The Missing Concept

- There are good reasons to doubt whether Callicott's account of moral psychology incorporates the richness of Leopold's writings.
- For it inserts much that Leopold did not discuss, and leaves out much that he did discuss: 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.
- *"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 1949 p. viii-ix)
- Following Leopold, our interpretation links together these *three concepts*: **ecology – cultural harvest – and ethics**.



Stage 2: The Cultural Harvest

- Leopold's term for the ways that the Land can enrich, infuse & ennoble our lives.
- The 'cultural harvest' captures the activities, achievements, experiences & pursuits – the **human goods** – that the interaction between people & Land can provide.
- These 'goods' include
 - the **stories** we can tell & enjoy;
 - the **beauty** & aesthetic we can apprehend;
 - the wonders of **rarity** & **trophy** the Land provides;
 - the way it can become a reflection of our own **personalities**; and,
 - the wonders & challenges to our **learning** it presents.

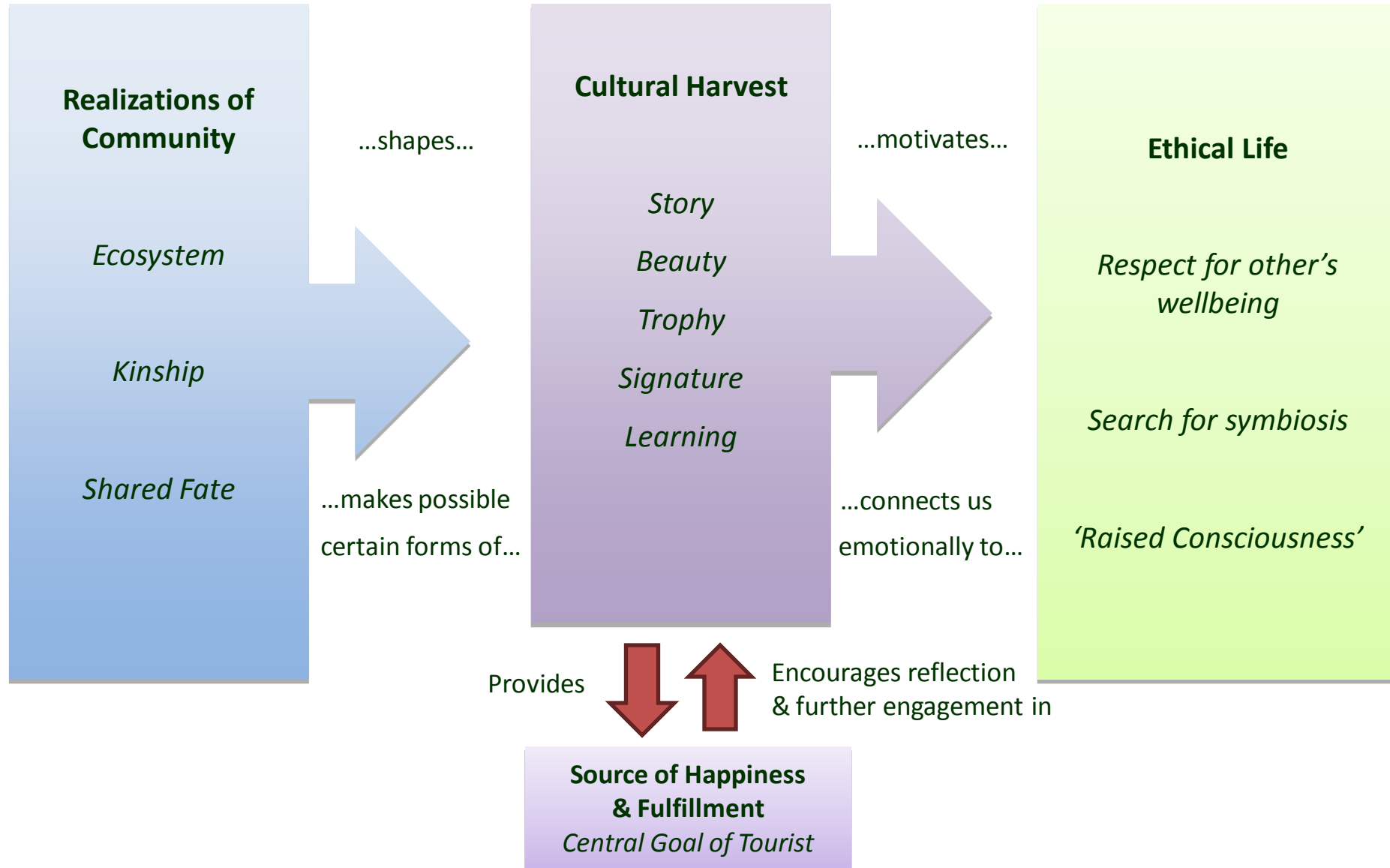




Stage 2: The Cultural Harvest

- Leopold's focus is on the Land,
 - > but his argument is based on a theory of moral development in & towards *human beings*
 - > this theory is then being *built upon & extended* to animals & the Land itself.
- The learned ideas of community, the ennobling and enriching cultural harvests, and respectful moral action all apply in the first instance to human-human relationships, and then develop to encompass human-animal and human-Land relationships.

Including the 'Cultural Harvest'



Applying Leopold's 'Land Ethic' to tourism

- We argue that a proper understanding of the Cultural Harvest demonstrates how activities like tourism play an important and positive role in a person's ethical development.





Tourism & ‘Story’

- Ideas of community frame how a story can be understood & enjoyed. These ‘Stage 1’ ideas may be previously known by the audience, or articulated within the story itself.
- The story piques our emotions, allowing us (at Stage 2) to identify with the characters and feel their pains and wellbeing as our own.
- **Tourism** provides a key setting & opportunity to engage tourists in the stories of the Land & its people.
- In tourism experiences, connections can be made, reinforced or solidified through the telling of the story, an effective interpretive method, a Stage 2 opportunity.

BRICKENDON

World Heritage Listed Colonial Farm Village
& Accommodation, Longford Tasmania.



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BRICKENDON LONGFORD TASMANIA

A rich tapestry of early Tasmanian history is encapsulated at Brickendon. Immerse yourself in the incredible story of the Archer family, Assigned convicts, Free workers and the beginnings of Australia's pastoral and agricultural industry.

Stay at Brickendon



Brickendon collects memory



MEMORIES: Sandra Cahill of Brickendon Estate at Longford is helping to collect memories related to the historic estate.



LIVING HISTORY: William Archer's cottage, Brickendon.

MEMORIES of past ways of living help us all to uncover and even explain our current identities and our place in the world. Memories can connect us all.

Brickendon Estate and its sister property Woolmers Estate – both recently elevated to the UNESCO World Heritage List for their significance as examples of our convict past – are actively gathering people's memories and stories connected to the historic Longford sites.

The Collecting Memories Project is being run at all five of Tasmania's listed World Heritage sites and seeks to enhance the connections between the convict sites and the communities in which they have played

such an important role since the early 1800s.

So if you have memories or stories of your ancestors' connection with these places, then the managers of both properties would love to hear them. Better still, if you have diaries, photographs, letters or memorabilia, these snapshots of our shared history will be collected together over the next 12 months in a social history of the five sites to be published in Heritage Week 2012.

Brickendon part owner Louise Archer told *The Country Courier* that a recent "show and tell" open day had already uncovered some fascinating stories.

"One was a woman whose ancestor was indentured

to [the estate's founder] William Archer," she said.

Sandra Cahill from Brickendon said another ring about an old family diary that recorded personal reminiscences of daily life on the estate in 1905. "She was very excited and wanted to share her family's intimate connections to Brickendon," Sandra said.

"These stories provide a tangible window into the past and will help produce a wonderful social history of the estates and their central role in our community."

To get involved in the Collecting Memories Project simply call the Brickendon Estate on 6391 1251 or the Woolmers Estate on 6391 2230.



Tourism & 'Beauty'

- Stage 2 aesthetic appreciation combines with Stage 1 ideas of community to help a person appreciate objects of beauty (and the entities that produce and sustain these) as being valuable and worth protecting.
- We are not limited to appreciating only the snapshot of nature before us, but its place in a larger process: not only what it is but *what it means*.
- Engagement with this element of the cultural harvest occurs when we apprehend the beauty of nature, or of other cultures (e.g. their music & dance) – staples of **tourism**.
- Such engagement helps us appreciate, respect & value that object of beauty.

The Pilbara



Tourism & 'Trophy'

- This Stage 2 element invokes two very-human attributes: fascination for what is rare & the human desire to hunt for trophies.
- These two are linked: the most sought-after trophies are the objects & experiences that are most difficult to obtain.
- **Tourism** activities are one of the central ways that people pursue & capture the rareness & wonder of the world.
- The most visible example of this are the tales & photos tourists bring home of their exotic encounters.







Tourism & 'Signature'

- 'Signature' describes the way we record our personality through our interactions with nature & people.
- Our legacy determines whether we are the planter, the sculptor, the steward or the artist.
- It is well-known that **tourism** choices & behaviour are expressions of our personality

Some tourists prefer a safe destination with a familiar accommodation provider, while others seek to discover new tourism experiences, which communicates to the world their leadership and adventurous nature (Plog 1974)





Gallery

[All Images](#) / [Botswana](#) / [Congo](#) / [Kenya](#) / [Malawi](#) / [Namibia](#) / [South Africa](#) / [Seychelles](#) / [Zambia](#) / [Zimbabwe](#)



Our journeys change lives

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. In short, we believe that the world's wilderness areas will save humankind.

Through our safari operations and private access to nearly three million hectares of southern Africa's finest wildlife areas, we offer our guests a unique and life-changing experience.



Tourism & 'Learning'

- Learning can become its own source of excitement and satisfaction.
- The Land presents us with an almost infinite challenge to learn, where each discovery serves only to open more questions.
- The more we learn, the more we are brought into the aesthetic & the story of the land

“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” (Leopold 1992 p. 337)

- **Tourism** learning is part of ecotourism, and interpretation is often provided.





Improving Best Practice

- Do we want people to treasure the environment?
- If so, then can we be more effective in the ways we provide story, beauty, trophy, signature and learning?

Improving Best Practice



- Are our stories stage 1 (ideas & facts) or stage 2 (characters & emotions)? Can we incorporate more Stage 2 qualities?
- Are we providing quick opportunities for 'pretty' scenery – or richer experiences of beauty?
- As tourism development makes special experiences more accessible, does this eliminate the 'challenge' & endanger its appeal in terms of trophy?
- How are experiences positioned? Are we maximizing opportunities for tourists to take ownership and be involved?
- What learning is happening? Does it incite curiosity and wonder? Enthusing tourists about learning and its achievements is itself a benefit.

Greatest benefit?

- Which of these five elements makes the most difference to moral development and ecological consciousness raising?
- Leopold's work, and the three-stage theory, give us a better understanding of these issues, and the questions to ask.
- But to get specific answers we require empirical studies!
- Planning a quantitative approach about current experiences, and a qualitative reflection about life-changing, inspiring or thought-provoking experiences about the environment.
- Visitor experiences? Your experiences?





Conclusions

- This paper has presented a vision of Leopold's Land Ethic that aims to provide a guide for maximizing the moral development of the environmental experiences offered.
- Building on people's understanding of community (Stage 1)
 - > tourism can engage them in the five elements of the cultural harvest: story, beauty, trophy, signature and learning (Stage 2)
 - > which assist in their progression towards an ethical life (Stage 3).

Conclusions

- The general activity of the tourist is morally important in itself, inasmuch as it can play a role in each person's ethical development.
 - > Tourists can be agents of sustainability.
- But how can this be harnessed better?
- Be part of the next stage of the research project!



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