Observations And Views Between Dillard & Leopold Essay, Research Paper

Observations and Views Between Dillard and Leopold

Aldo Leopold was born in 1887, died in 1948, in 1949 his book A Sand Country Almanac was published. He was a renowned scientist, scholar, teacher, philosopher, and gifted writer. His book is a collection of his nature writing, lyrical writings, praise for nature, and manifestos for people. Leopold undoubtedly believed in the preservation of wilderness, however it was not until the last two decades of his life that he developed his famed Land Ethic. This Land Ethic led to his christening as the Father of the National Forest Wilderness System. Previous to those writings, his motivation for conservation was less for the preservation of an ecosystem and more for the defense of good hunting game. However, through a series of eye opening experiences Leopold came to realize the importance of viewing the natural world as an entire biota, and then preserving it as such.

Annie Dillard was born in 1945, Pilgrim at Tinker Creek was written in 1974. Tinker Creek is a series of essays that combines scientific observation, philosophy, daily thoughts, and deep introspection with prose. On the surface Dillard is simply exploring a place called Tinker Creek and its inhabitants. But her observations range well beyond the landscape into worlds of mysterious fact and metaphysical insight. Dillard is a mystic and uses imagery constantly, she uses stories of her experiences living near Tinker Creek to speak about the human condition, and our relationship with the Divine. She references physics, literature, numerous religion traditions, anthropology, medicine, and folklore into her discussions. Dillard creates imagery, mystical themes, and symbolism. Pilgrim Creek is a moving look at the mystical relationship between God and nature, and an attempt to create the duality between suffering and beauty. Remembering there is almost three decades between Leopold and Dillards writings, the following dialogs could have taken place.

Dillard: Why would God create creatures in such great numbers that some must die of famine or why would he create creatures that live only by destroying other life? And you Mr. Leopold, why would you go out into the wild hunting down creatures and killing them for your own satisfaction? Humans, animals, and plants seem to be destined to exist as part of a horrific food chain. I am confused and frightened that God would thrust these conditions on us. Evolution loves death more than it loves you or me. This is easy to write, easy to read, and hard to believe. The words are simple, the concept clear-but you don t believe it, do you? Nor do I. How could I, when we re both so lovable? Are my values then so diametrically opposed to those that nature preserves? (Dillard, p.178)

Leopold: I was overtaken by the idea that hunting was sport and sport meant accomplishments, but I realized that my sport was disrupting the flow of an entire system of life. I realize now that shooting an animal because it does not fit into a man s construction of an ideal wilderness is wrong. I no longer see animals as prizes for myself, now I see them for the distinct and independent being they are. it has not dawned on (the hunter) that outdoor recreations are essentially primitive, atavistic; that their value is a contrast- value; that excessive mechanization destroys contrasts by moving the factory to the woods or to the marsh. (Leopold, p.216)

Leopold: I have learned through my own experiences that we do not have a complete control of the system. I now know we have to focus on land health. We need to restore a healthy ecosystem, the natural system has a basic resilience that enables it to maintain itself and survive wildfire, windthrow or disease. We need to help rebuild the system when it needs our help. My previous elements of ideas were the aesthetic sense, the ethical sense, and the love of the land and wildlife. I believe that the earth was fashioned by the Lord God, the Supreme Artist after whose works all the art of man has been initiated, and that every part of creation should therefore be held sacred. We may be able to live without the beauty of the stars, sunsets, or goose music, but because we are unable to replace the natural things we destroy, we would be foolish to do away with something simply because we felt we did not need it. (Leopold, p.230)

Dillard: The suffering and pain of the world is a substantial and puzzling element of God s creation. The air and wind is God s breath and God s creative power, it is the Divine expressing itself in the wind. The fires are God s unity with the material world the waters are the lifeblood of the planet. I believe God will use his powers to rebuild lands from his devastating actions. The law of nature is not survival of the fittest; it is more a matter of the survival of those who circumstantially survive. You can not enter nature or the natural world and expect to change the system.

Leopold: I acknowledge that we as humans, as visitors from the industrial world into the natural world, need to be taught the ways of the land and the ways of life. We have so distanced ourselves from nature that we need to relearn her rules. We are mistaken in thinking that we can waltz into the natural world, establish what we believe to be ideal, and then re-make the rules to benefit ourselves. Simply put, humans can not win that way. We must carefully step into the cycle, and run to nature s beat. To build a road is so much simpler than to think of what the country really needs. (Leopold.p.107)

REFERENCES

Dillard, Annie. Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, HarperPerennial.

Leopold, Aldo. A Sand County Almanac, Ballantine Books.

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