The Land Ethic
Leopold’s “Ethical Sequence”

“Aldo Leopold
1887-1948

“The first ethics dealt with the relation between individuals. […] Later accretions dealt with the relation between the individual and society. […] There is as yet no ethic dealing with man’s relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it. […] The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.”

Moral Extensionism: At first I value only myself. Then I extend my moral community to include my family, then my neighbors, then all human beings, then animals, then plants, and finally the dirt itself. Is this what Leopold is doing?
Leopold’s “Land Ethic”

“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”
Kinds of Value

How we value X:

• final (to value X for its own sake)
• instrumental (to value X for the sake of something else)

The source of X’s value:

• intrinsic (X’s value comes from within)
• extrinsic (X’s value comes from something else)
## The Moral Value Square

**Final**: to value X for its own sake  
**Instrumental**: to value X for the sake of something else.  
**Intrinsic**: X’s value comes from within.  
**Extrinsic**: X’s value comes from something else.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Atomistic</th>
<th>Biocentric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anthropocentric</strong></td>
<td>All value resides in the human individual [Kant]</td>
<td>All value resides in the living individual. (animal welfare/rights) [Singer, Regan, Goodpaster, Leopold?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Holistic</strong></td>
<td>All value resides in the well-being of the human community.</td>
<td>All value resides in the well-being of the biotic community. (ecocentric ethics) [Muir, Leopold?, Abbey, Naess]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Callicott on the Land Ethic

Conceptual Foundations

Evolutionary Theory (diachronic): links ethics and social organization.

Ecological Theory (synchronous): links human and non-human nature into one community.

Copernican Astronomy: emphasizes the earth as an island of life in otherwise desolate space.