

ethology-grounded understanding of the emotional lives of animals, she added a belief that animals have souls and can communicate with human beings. Moreover, she has an affinity for Gaian Spirituality, with her oceanic experiences of oneness with the universe during intimate times in nature, which led her to consider the universe and earth in general, and especially the wild places where special revelations occur, as sacred places.

Goodall, like many involved in dark green religion, is thus developing a hybridized spirituality that draws on both science and personal spiritual experience that includes animistic perceptions, holistic metaphysics, and a belief that there is some superordinate intelligence animating the universe.

An Interpreter of Wolves and Mountains. Many consider the American Aldo Leopold (1887–1948) to be the greatest ecologist and environmental ethicist of the twentieth century. Also one of the country's first foresters, Leopold expressed at an affective level something that may be unavailable from science alone, namely, a deep emotional connection to and reverence for the earth. Leopold is best known today for his "land ethic," which many consider to be the foremost expression of an ecocentric ethic. The most famous passages in this ethic follow:

All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. . . .

The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.

In short, a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members and also respect for the community as such.

It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value. By value, I of course mean something far broader than mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense.

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.

I have purposely presented the land ethic as a product of social evolution because nothing so important as an ethic is ever "written." . . .

The evolution of a land ethic is an intellectual as well as emotional process.⁴⁴

For Leopold, the perceptual shift needed for the land ethic must be grounded both in science and our deepest emotions. But he felt that people had become so separated from and ignorant of the land community that they no longer had a “vital relation to it.” Developing any ethic depends on changing our “loyalties, affections, and convictions,” but it was difficult to promote a land ethic because “philosophy and religion have not yet heard of it.” Making the point three decades before Lynn White, Leopold forthrightly asserted that Western religion was to blame: “Conservation is getting nowhere because it is incompatible with our Abrahamic concept of land. We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.”⁴⁵

Leopold clearly sought to awaken a reverence for life. One way he did this was to draw on Darwinian cosmogony, an evolutionary understanding of how the world came to be the way it is. With reasoning similar to Darwin’s, Leopold thought this would evoke kinship feelings, a sense of ethical responsibility toward all life, and a corresponding wonder toward nature: “It is a century now since Darwin gave us the first glimpse of the origin of species. We know now what was unknown to all the preceding caravan of generations: that men are only fellow-voyagers with other creatures in the odyssey of evolution. This new knowledge should have given us . . . a sense of kinship with fellow-creatures; a wish to live and let live; a sense of wonder over . . . the biotic enterprise.”⁴⁶ In Leopold’s perceptions we see the main elements of dark green religion: a critique of Abrahamic religion and a feeling that all species have a right to be here, a sense of belonging and connection to nature, and a consecration of the evolutionary story. This passage echoes Darwin’s expression of evolutionary kinship and wonder at the grandeur of the evolutionary process.

Indeed, for Leopold, the evolutionary story is not *only* a scientific narrative, it is an *odyssey*—an epic, heroic journey—and for many, this assumes a sacred, mythic character. In 1978 E. O. Wilson first used the phrase “Epic of Evolution,” calling it “the best myth we will ever have” to capture the feelings of awe, wonder, and grandeur that scientific observers of nature often feel.⁴⁷ Wilson’s phrase sounds very much like the “odyssey of evolution” that Leopold wrote about in the 1940s. By the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, new forms of religious creativity emerged that promoted the Epic of Evolution and the so-called Universe Story as new sacred narratives for humankind. But Leopold told another story in *A Sand County Almanac*, in an essay ti-