

Was Aldo Leopold a Pragmatist? Rescuing Leopold from the Imagination of Bryan Norton

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ABSTRACT

Aldo Leopold was a pragmatist in the vernacular sense of the word. Bryan G. Norton claims that Leopold was also heavily influenced by American Pragmatism, a formal school of philosophy. As evidence, Norton offers Leopold's misquotation of a definition of *right* (as *truth*) by political economist, A.T. Hadley, who was an admirer of the philosophy of William James. A search of Leopold's digitised literary remains reveals no other evidence that Leopold was *directly* influenced by any actual American Pragmatist or by Pragmatism (although he may have been indirectly influenced by Pragmatism early in his career). A 1923 reference, by Leopold, to Hadley and Hadley's putative definition of *truth*, cited by Norton, is dripping with irony. Leopold, as he matured philosophically, regarded a profound cultural shift from anthropocentric dominionism and consumerism to an evolutionary-ecological worldview and an associated non-anthropocentric 'land ethic' to be necessary for successful and sustainable conservation. Hadley espoused a brutal form of Social Darwinism and his philosophy, as expressed in the book of Hadley's that Norton cites, is politically reactionary, militaristic and unconcerned with conservation. Leopold's mature philosophy and Hadley's – far from consonant, as Norton claims – are diametrically opposed.

KEYWORDS

Hadley, conservation, ecology, evolution, nonanthropocentric

1. INTRODUCTION

To answer directly the question that is the title of this article: Yes, of course, Aldo Leopold was a pragmatist – *if* being a pragmatist means taking a flexible approach to problem solving, monitoring progress toward goals, and altering the means and methods of achieving those goals – or even altering the goals themselves – in the light of subsequent experience. Leopold was certainly no dogmatic ideologue, who stuck with a policy or practice in the face of repeated failure and a torrent of evidence indicating that the policy was ill-conceived or the practice counter-productive. Indeed, in his 1930 ‘Report to the American Game Conference on an American Game Policy’, he writes, ‘We urge all factions to co-operate ... and to let experience dictate succeeding steps. We believe, in short, that experiment, not doctrine or prophecy, is the key to an American Game Policy’ (Leopold, 1991a: 151). And, in his 1932 ‘Game and Wildlife Conservation’, he writes, ‘The worthiness of any cause is not measured by its clean record, but by its readiness to see the blots when they are pointed out and to change its mind’ (Leopold, 1991b: 168).

The answer to our title question must be an equally emphatic No – *if* being a pragmatist means espousing the tenets of a school of philosophy called American Pragmatism and being intellectually swayed by the works of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey, or any exponents of that school of philosophy. Nor did Leopold independently come to views similar to some of the American Pragmatists, especially those who regarded metaphysical differences and their axiological implications – differences in basic belief about the nature of nature, human nature, and the relationship between humans and nature and associated ways of valuing nature – to be otiose. No unbiased reader of Leopold’s posthumously published masterpiece, *A Sand County Almanac*, needs more evidence than that book to be convinced of the immense importance to Leopold of the philosophical implications of evolutionary biology and ecology and of the land ethic and aesthetic that for Leopold were among those philosophical implications. And the immense importance that Leopold attached to the philosophical – the conceptual and axiological – implications of evolutionary biology and ecology was not merely academic; it was in service of environmental management and conservation practice: ‘No important change’ in human behaviour, Leopold (1949: 209–210, emphasis added) wrote, ‘was ever accomplished without an internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections, and convictions. The proof that *conservation* has not yet touched these foundations of conduct lies in the fact that philosophy and

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religion have not yet heard of it. In our attempt to make *conservation* easy, we have made it trivial.’

To keep these two senses of *pragmatist* and *pragmatism* nomenclaturally distinct, henceforward we use a lower-case ‘p’ for the common-sense, vernacular, everyday kind of pragmatist and pragmatism and a capital ‘P’ for the Pragmatists who constitute the American school of philosophy called Pragmatism.

Early in his career, Leopold may have been *indirectly* influenced by Pragmatism to the extent that Pragmatism influenced the Progressive movement in American history, of which Gifford Pinchot was a leading figure (Minteer, 2006). Pinchot was the Chief of the United States Forest Service, which was established in 1905, when Leopold joined it in 1909. Even before joining the Service, Leopold was steeped in Pinchot’s instrumentalist and utilitarian philosophy of resource management at the Yale Forest School, which was founded by Pinchot and Henry Graves, who was also the School’s first dean, in 1900. Pinchot’s debt to utilitarianism is indicated by his oft-quoted motto: ‘the greatest good, for the greatest number in the long run’ (Pinchot 1947: xvii). According to Char Miller (2004), Pinchot’s biographer, Pinchot intentionally echoed Jeremy Bentham’s utilitarian maxim ‘the greatest happiness of the greatest number’. While Pinchot may not have endorsed the hedonic axiological foundations of utilitarianism, he was certainly an ardent anthropocentric instrumentalist. Pinchot (1947: 325) wrote, ‘there are just two things on this material earth – people and natural resources’. We contend, however, agreeing with the accounts of Susan L. Flader (1974) and Curt Meine (1988), that there is overwhelming documentary evidence that Leopold abandoned Pinchot’s philosophy of resource management – the point of no return coming in the 1930s, after Leopold left the Forest Service in 1929. Thus, whatever indirect influence Pragmatism may have exerted on Leopold early in his career – via its influence on Progressivism, the institutional culture of the Forest Service, led by Pinchot – Leopold’s mature philosophy of resource management was not even indirectly influenced by Pragmatism.

Bryan G. Norton (1988, 1991, 2005) claims, contrary to Flader and Meine, that Leopold underwent no significant philosophical change in his long career as a practising conservationist. Norton argues, further, that the influence of Pragmatism on Leopold was direct and that Leopold was not only a pragmatist in the vernacular sense, but that he was an adherent of Pragmatism in the philosophical sense. To support this latter claim, Norton (2005: 97) points out that Leopold was a pragmatist. There are, however, and have been uncountable pragmatists – flexible policy makers and practition-

ers – whose pragmatism owes nothing to any Pragmatist or Pragmatism. Norton also points out that Leopold mentions the name ‘Hadley’. We do not doubt that Leopold refers to Arthur Twining Hadley (1856–1930), a political economist noted for his expertise in railroad transportation (Hadley 1885, 1896). A.T. Hadley (1896, 1913) was a Social Darwinist, as Norton (1991, 2005) himself frankly acknowledges. Hadley was also an admirer of Pragmatism, especially of the version of it developed by William James (Hadley 1913). Norton (1988, 1991, 2005) also claims that Leopold (1991c: 97) commends Hadley’s definition of *truth* as ‘that which prevails in the long run’. Actually, as Norton (1988) admits, Hadley (1913) defined *right* not *truth*. We agree, in any case, that Hadley espoused Pragmatism and that what Leopold represents to be Hadley’s definition of *truth* was in the Pragmatist vein.

The two references by Leopold to Hadley and to what Leopold represents to be Hadley’s definition of *truth* cited by Norton (2005) are (i) an unpublished ‘address’ titled ‘The Civic Life of Albuquerque’, delivered in 1918 to the Albuquerque Woman’s Club and (ii) an essay, ‘Some Fundamentals of Conservation in the Southwest’, written in 1923 and published posthumously in 1979 in *Environmental Ethics*. We find two more that have gone unnoticed by Norton: (iii) Leopold quotes what he purports to be Hadley’s definition of *truth*, without naming Hadley, in the ‘The Wilderness in Forest Recreational Policy’, published in the *Journal of Forestry* in 1921; (iv) Leopold used his (mis)quotation of Hadley’s definition of *right* (as *truth*) for an epigram of an unpublished (and undated) ‘Wilderness Bulletin’, apparently written in late 1924 or early 1925. Except for those four occasions in the brief span of time from 1918 to 1924/25, there are no other references to Hadley or to his putative definition of *truth* in any of Leopold’s writings, published or unpublished; nor are there references to any other Pragmatist or to Pragmatism.¹

We strongly disagree with Norton that Leopold consistently commended Hadley’s definition of *truth* during that brief period. Rather, we concede that Leopold appears to commend Hadley’s definition of *right* (as *truth*) in his 1918 Woman’s Club address. It is not clear whether Leopold commends that definition or quotes it (as he rendered it) for ironic effect in his 1921 wilderness article in the *Journal of Forestry*. Its appearance as an epigram of the 1924 ‘Wilderness Bulletin’ is enigmatic. However, in the 1923 manuscript – the place that Norton (1988, 1991, 2005) cites as the primary source for his claim that Leopold was an adherent of Pragmatism – Leopold clearly ridiculed it. Irony is a rhetorical device that Leopold uses throughout his

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literary career. His mention of Hadley's definition of *right* (as *truth*) in 'Some Fundamentals' is dripping with irony, as we demonstrate.

Norton is a prolific scholar and has reiterated his representation of Leopold as a devotee of Pragmatism in many publications. In an article-length discussion such as ours, space does not permit a summary, analysis and criticism of them all. We therefore confine our discussion here to three of Norton's works: (i) 'The Constancy of Leopold's Land Ethic', published in *Conservation Biology* in 1988, his first portrayal of Leopold as an adherent of Pragmatism; (ii) a chapter, 'Aldo Leopold and the Search for an Integrated Theory of Environmental Management', in Norton's book, *Toward Unity among Environmentalists*, published in 1991; and (iii) in two chapters, 'Language as Our Environment' and 'Epistemology and Adaptive Management' in Norton's book, *Sustainability: A Philosophy of Adaptive Management*, published in 2005.

A definitive, coherent characterisation of the core doctrines of American Pragmatism would be as impossible to achieve as a definitive, coherent characterisation of the core doctrines of American Transcendentalism or European Existentialism. American Pragmatism is a rich and diverse family of philosophies, nor do any two Pragmatists, say James and Dewey, agree on all matters of epistemology and axiology. Without committing ourselves to any generalisations about Pragmatism, we parse what Norton regards as the bedrock of a Pragmatist philosophy of conservation and environmental management as follows: (1) the marginalisation, for the practical purposes of environmental management and conservation practice, of *alternative* philosophical beliefs and comprehensive worldviews and their associated values; (2) the desubstantiation of such beliefs, worldviews and values as mere differences in choice of language; (3) the foundation of environmental policy and conservation practice on society's *prevailing* philosophical beliefs, comprehensive worldview and associated values; and (4) the representation of socially prevailing philosophical beliefs, comprehensive worldview and associated values as privileged and not themselves equally 'metaphysical' or philosophically problematic as are the alternatives to them. (We document all of these tenets of Pragmatism, as Norton represents it, by reference to Norton's writings in the discussion that follows and flag them with 'Pragmatist tenet 1, 2, 3 or 4' in parentheses, as the case may be.)

We begin with a critique of Norton's argument, as it first appeared in 1988, that Leopold was an adherent of Pragmatism as he learned it from Hadley. Because our difference with Norton turns on the question – Was Leopold's reference to Hadley and his putative definition of *truth* in 'Some Fundamentals' ironic or sincere? – we discuss Leopold's habitual use of

irony as a rhetorical trope to settle that question definitively. We then trace the alleged influence of Hadley on Leopold's thinking as Norton developed it in 1991 and again in 2005. We conclude with an exposition of Hadley's jingoistic Social Darwinism and show that it was diametrically opposed to Leopold's inclusive and gentle ethical proclivities.

2. NORTON'S INTERPRETATION OF LEOPOLD AS A PRAGMATIST: 1988

In 'The Constancy of Leopold's Land Ethic', Norton begins by noting Leopold's one-hundred-eighty degree shift regarding predator management over a quarter century – from a policy of eradication to one of protection – and acknowledges that 'It is tempting to believe that, during this period, Leopold ... underwent a profound religious-metaphysical-moral change, and that his about-face on predator control programs was a direct result of this profound philosophical conversion' (Norton, 1988: 94). According to Norton (1988: 94), that apparent 'conversion' was from 'Gifford Pinchot's humanistic utilitarianism' to 'organicism and its metaphysical and moral implications'. Flader (1974) attributes this reversal of Leopold's views and values regarding predators to (i) self education in the sciences of ecology and evolutionary biology and to his acquisition, thereupon, of an evolutionary-ecological worldview and (ii) the managerial debacles to which predator management, based on Pinchot's anthropocentric instrumentalism, had led – in particular to an irruption of deer after predators had been removed from their range, accompanied by over-browsing of vegetation palatable to them, followed by a crash in their population. There is overwhelming documentary evidence that what is tempting to believe is in fact true.

Early in his career, Leopold did indeed endorse 'Gifford Pinchot's humanistic utilitarianism', as Norton characterises it. In the aforementioned 1921 'The Wilderness and Its Place in Forest Recreational Policy' Leopold (1991d: 78, emphasis added) writes,

When the National Forests were created the first argument of those opposing a national forest policy was that forests would remain a wilderness. *Gifford Pinchot* replied that on the contrary they would be opened up and developed as producing forests, and that such development would, *in the long run*, itself constitute the best assurance that they would neither remain a wilderness by "bottling up" their resources nor become one through devastation. At this time *Pinchot* enunciated the doctrine of "highest use," and its criterion, "*the*

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greatest good to the greatest number,” which is and must remain the guiding principle by which democracies handle their natural resources.

In ‘Thinking Like a Mountain’, the *Sand County* essay from which Flader borrowed her title, Leopold expresses, with characteristic simplicity and charm, the anthropocentric instrumentalism that characterised his early managerial thinking. After remorsefully describing an occasion on which he had personally murdered a mother wolf, he writes, ‘I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters’ paradise’ (Leopold, 1949: 130). The transformation in Leopold’s thinking had fully taken hold about the time – the mid- to late-1930s – that Flader (1974) suggests that it did. For example, in ‘The Arboretum and the University’, a 1934 article published in *Parks and Recreation*, Leopold (1991e: 209, emphasis added) writes:

For twenty centuries and longer, all civilized thought has rested upon one basic premise: that it is the destiny of man to exploit and enslave the earth.

The biblical injunction to “go forth and multiply” is merely one of many dogmas which imply this attitude of philosophical imperialism.

During the past few decades, however, a new science called *ecology* has been unobtrusively spreading a film of doubt over this heretofore unchallenged “world view.” *Ecology* tells us that no animal – not even man – can be regarded as independent of his environment. Plants, animals, men, and soil are a community of interdependent parts, *an organism*. No organism can survive the decadence of a member. Mr. Babbitt is no more a separate entity than his left arm, or a single cell of his biceps.

In a 1939 article, ‘The Farmer as a Conservationist’, Leopold (1991f: 259, emphasis added) declared that ‘Sometimes I think that *ideas*, like men, can become dictators. We Americans have so far escaped regimentation by our rulers, but have we escaped regimentation by our own *ideas*? I doubt if there exists today a more complete regimentation of the human mind than that accomplished by our own self-imposed *doctrine of ruthless utilitarianism*.’

Norton (1988: 94), nonetheless, seeks to minimise the importance to Leopold of ‘organicism and its metaphysical and moral implications’ in the context of environmental management and conservation policy (Pragmatist tenet 1): such ‘abstract views had little direct impact on his [Leopold’s] managerial style’. The insinuation is this (Pragmatist tenet 4): organicism is a ‘religious-metaphysical-moral’ *abstract view*, which has no business in environmental management and conservation practice and policy; while anthropocentric instrumentalism does, because it is just good old fashioned hard-nosed common sense and, in any case, it’s the dominant worldview of

our culture. But, as these quotations from Leopold's writing in the 1930s demonstrate, Leopold regarded 'Gifford Pinchot's humanistic utilitarianism' itself to be metaphysical, grounded in religion, and fraught with untoward axiological implications.

According to Norton (1988: 94), 'Leopold had embraced the main philosophical elements of ... American [P]ragmatism, a philosophical approach that Leopold had borrowed from Arthur Twining Hadley who was president of Yale University when Leopold was a student there.' Hadley was president of Yale from 1899 to 1922 and Leopold was a student there from 1904 to 1909. The single reed on which Norton, in 'Constancy', floats his admittedly anomalous case – that Leopold had embraced the main philosophical elements of American Pragmatism, which he borrowed from Hadley during his Yale years, and that he maintained a lifelong commitment to the humanistic utilitarianism of Pinchot, which Norton considers to be consonant with Pragmatism – is Leopold's mention of what he purports to be Hadley's definition of *truth* in 'Some Fundamentals of Conservation in the Southwest': "'Truth is that which prevails in the long run"!'.

As Norton (1988: 95) quotes it, Hadley's actual 'definition' was a definition of *right* not of *truth*: 'The criterion which shows whether a thing is right or wrong is its permanence. Survival is not merely the characteristic of right; it is the test of right' (Hadley, 1913: 71). In case a sceptical reader noticed this discrepancy, Norton (1988: 101) then dismisses it in a footnote as of no consequence in the context of Pragmatism, which 'treated "true" and "right" as largely interchangeable'. Perhaps we should list that also among the bedrocks of Pragmatism, as Norton represents it – and leave it to students of Pragmatism to judge the cogency of Norton's claim that in the context of Pragmatism *true* and *right* are largely interchangeable.

This definition of *right* is variously repeated several times in the book of Hadley's, *Some Influences in Modern Philosophic Thought*, that Norton cites. Coming before the passage that Norton quotes, Hadley (1913: 35) writes, 'The scientific man ... is concerned to study the right and wrong of things; and he believes, as the very essence of his theory, that the right is that which will prevail in the long run.' And coming after the passage that Norton quotes, Hadley (1913: 98) writes: 'Where previous generations said, "Right must prevail in the long run," and held it as a somewhat dim article of religious faith, the present generation sets out to discover what is going to prevail in the long run, in the full confidence that if this can be found it will be right.'

According to Hadley (1913: 73), 'We hold the beliefs which have preserved our fathers. It is not far from the truth to say that we hold them because they

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have preserved our fathers.’ That Leopold was a thoroughgoing disciple of Hadley is confirmed, according to Norton (1988: 95), by Leopold’s quotation from the biblical Book of Ezekiel at the beginning of the third section, ‘Conservation as a Moral Issue’, of ‘Some Fundamentals’: ‘When Leopold invoked Ezekiel, he was invoking the “beliefs that preserved our fathers”’. As understood by Hadley, the [P]ragmatists’ notion of truth amounted to a recommendation that we respect the wisdom of our ancestors.’ We find, however, that by 1934, Leopold characterised ‘biblical’ beliefs as ‘dogmas ... of philosophical imperialism’.

Hadley (1913: 73) goes on immediately to affirm that ‘we hold the belief that has preserved our fathers as an intuition and act on it as an instinct’. In ‘Some Fundamentals’ Leopold uses the phrase ‘intuitive perceptions’. Thus, Norton (1988: 95) confidently concludes that ‘When Leopold mentioned intuitive perceptions, Ezekiel’s admonition to treat the land with respect, he was invoking Hadley’s intuitions of our fathers’. Leopold uses an English word (*intuitive*) that is not uncommon and Hadley a cognate one (*intuition*) – but that is hardly convincing evidence that Leopold is therefore ‘invoking’ Hadley. Further, Leopold’s use of ‘intuitive perceptions’ comes well after he had moved on from Ezekiel to the organicism he found in P.D. Ouspensky’s writings.

Norton goes on to argue that Leopold reduces abstract philosophical differences to insubstantial differences in the choice of language (Pragmatist tenet 2). In ‘Some Fundamentals’, Leopold (1991c: 95) writes that

[I]t is at least not impossible to regard the earth’s parts – soil, mountains, rivers, atmosphere, etc. – as organs, or parts of organs, of a coordinated whole, each part with a definite function. And if we could see this whole, as a whole, through a great period of time, we might perceive not only organs with coordinated functions, but possibly also that process of consumption and replacement which in biology we call the metabolism, or growth. In such a case we would have all the visible attributes of a living thing, which we do not now realize to be such because it is too big, and its life processes too slow. And there would also follow that invisible attribute – a soul, or consciousness – which not only Ouspensky, but many philosophers of all ages, ascribe to all living things and aggregations thereof, including the “dead earth.”

Leopold (1991c: 95, emphasis added) then goes on immediately to write: ‘There is not much discrepancy, *except in language*, between this conception of a living earth, and the conception of a dead earth, with enormously slow, intricate, and interrelated functions among its parts, as given us by physics, chemistry, and geology.’ Norton seizes on this and other of Leopold’s

references to the ‘pitfalls of language’ to give this passage a Jamesian spin. William James (1907: 17) famously settled a ‘ferocious metaphysical dispute’ among his friends about whether a man chasing a squirrel around a tree went around the squirrel, as well as around the tree, by making it all turn on a choice of language – what we choose to mean by *around*. According to Norton (1988: 96, emphasis added),

When Leopold compared different conceptions of the earth, he was speaking of what might be called second-order beliefs. The facts about the world around us, the facts of physics, chemistry, and geology, are first order beliefs about the way the world is. Organicism and mechanism, two alternative conceptions of the world, in Leopold’s terminology, are second-order beliefs about how to interpret the first-order facts of the particular sciences. Leopold was arguing that organicism and mechanism can accept the same first-order facts about the world *and that the choice between these two interpretations is mainly a difference of language.*

Norton need not add that such differences in language are as insubstantial and as practically otiose as that ‘ferocious metaphysical dispute’, settled by James merely with alternative definitions of a word. In this case, however, we have a third-order belief that adjudicates between second-order beliefs, according to Norton (Pragmatist tenet 3):

Hadley’s pragmatic definition of truth therefore functioned, in Leopold’s early philosophy, as a third-order principle, as a means to judge second-order conceptions of the world and to provide a criterion for distinguishing acceptable cultural practices from unacceptable ones. . . . Leopold therefore resolved, early in his career, to enter the policy arena armed only with arguments based on long-sighted anthropocentrism, rather than basing his moral strictures on nonanthropocentrism (Norton, 1988: 97).

We do not doubt that Leopold, as a pragmatist, would cast his environmental management practices and efforts to formulate sound conservation policy in the terms of any number of conceptions of the world, if that got the various stakeholders – farmers, bankers, politicians – with whom he worked to cooperate in the success of those practices and policies. But simply being pragmatic does not a Pragmatist make, as we began by noting. Nor does the fact that Leopold was pragmatic imply that he did not hope eventually to educate fellow members of his culture in the fundamentals of ecology and the implications of the theory of evolution and to convert them to the organismic evolutionary-ecological worldview that he was convinced is true. That’s just what Leopold aims to do in *A Sand County Almanac*. As he says in the foreword to his masterpiece,

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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 a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. ...

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. ...

These essays attempt to weld these three concepts (Leopold 1949: viii–ix).

In ‘Some Fundamentals’, Leopold (1991c: 96) writes, ‘Since most of mankind today profess either one of the anthropomorphic religions or the scientific school of thought which is likewise anthropomorphic, I will not dispute the point.’ Norton takes Leopold’s words to mean that Leopold diffidently deferred, as a land manager, to the anthropocentrism dominating American culture (Pragmatist tenet 3). We agree with Norton that by *anthropomorphic* Leopold could only mean what contemporary environmental philosophers mean by *anthropocentric*. And we agree that Leopold did not *dispute* anthropocentrism, but not, however, because Leopold (Pragmatist tenet 1) ‘shied away from metaphysical and theological pronouncements’ (Norton, 1988: 96). Rather, he did not dispute the point because he thought that anthropocentrism was so ridiculous that it should not be dignified by dispute. Instead, he did the only thing appropriate to do in regard to ridiculous things, he ridiculed it:

It just occurs to me, however, in answer to the scientists, that God started his show a good many millions of years before he had any men for audience – a sad waste of both actors and music – and in answer to both, that it is just barely possible that God himself likes to hear birds sing and see flowers grow (Leopold, 1991c: 96).

Norton is quick to point out that this is followed by another reference to the inadequacy of language, as if the difference between anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric worldviews and values is just a trivial albeit ‘ferocious’ difference in choice of vocabulary (Pragmatist tenet 2). On the contrary, when Leopold (1991c: 96) writes, ‘But here again we encounter the insufficiency of words as symbols for realities’, he is alerting the reader that these references to God and His aesthetic tastes are not to be understood literally. Put in plain language, Leopold’s point is this: It is preposterous to believe that the world was devoid of beauty and goodness until the arrival of *Homo sapiens* only moments ago on the temporal scale of Earth’s biography – but that’s what anthropocentrists want us to think.

Leopold (1991c: 96) then continues ridiculing anthropocentrism – and this is the context in which he mentions Hadley and his misremembered definition of *right* (as *truth*):

Granting that the earth is for man – there is still a question: which man? Did not the cliff dwellers who tilled and irrigated these our valleys think that they were the pinnacle of creation – that these valleys were made for them? Undoubtedly. And then the Pueblos? Yes. And then the Spaniards? Not only thought so, but said so. And now we Americans? Ours beyond a doubt! (How happy a definition is that one of Hadley’s which states, “Truth is that which prevails in the long run”!).

Norton (1988) takes Leopold to affirm his commitment to anthropocentrism by ‘Granting that the earth is for man’. We take it that he is ‘granting that earth is for man’ for the sake of argument. Then Leopold presses the argument by asking ‘which man?’ And in so doing, he further ridicules anthropocentrism (the proposition ‘that the earth is for man’) by comparing it with ethnocentrism. In the course of that comparison, moreover, he also mocks and ridicules Hadley. The meaning is as crystal clear as the irony is cold and cutting. The cliff dwellers, the Pueblos, the Spaniards and the Americans all thought that they – each respectively and exclusively – were the pinnacle of creation for whom the Southwest was made. But they could not *all* be right! Their ethnocentric beliefs could not all be true, because if one group were the pinnacle of creation for whom the Southwest was made, the other groups could not also be that. But ethnocentrism, to say nothing of the anthropocentrism to which it is mockingly compared, evidently prevails in the long run. So, by Hadley’s lights, ethnocentrism is right (or true)! How, we wonder, could anyone read this passage differently? How could anyone suppose that Leopold is doing anything but mocking and ridiculing what he imprecisely recalls as Hadley’s definition of *truth* along with ethnocentrism and, by implication, anthropocentrism?

3. LEOPOLD’S USE OF IRONY

We contend that Leopold’s mention of what he imagined to be Hadley’s definition of *truth* in ‘Some Fundamentals’ is ironic, and, further, that it occurs in the course of an argument aimed at excoriating anthropocentrism.

Literary critic John Tallmadge (1987: 115) notes that ‘two features of *A Sand County Almanac* impress us at once: the brevity of its style and the personality of its narrator’. To achieve the former, Tallmadge suggests that Leopold employs two techniques: one Tallmadge calls ‘concentration’; the

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other he calls ‘engagement’. Concentration mostly involves a focus on the point at hand and economy of language. Engagement ‘invites the reader to contribute information that the text does not provide, thereby reducing the amount of explanation while increasing the density of implication. Leopold achieves this through repeated use of simple rhetorical figures, notably *synecdoche, allusion, irony, understatement, and rhetorical questions*’ (Tallmadge, 1987: 116, emphasis added).

Leopold’s references to Abraham(ic) are examples of *synecdoche* whereby the part stands for the whole. The ‘Abrahamic concept of land’ is the biblical or Judaeo-Christian concept of land (as Leopold understood it). Leopold’s repeated references to ‘Babbitt’, the principal character in a book of that title by Sinclair Lewis, is a parallel *synecdoche* standing for the self-absorbed, contentedly ignorant, consumerist ciphers that Leopold (1949: viii) hoped to ‘get back in step’ with his evolutionary-ecological worldview. In *Sand County*’s opening vignette, ‘January Thaw’, Leopold (1949: 3) *alludes* to Ralph Waldo Emerson’s essay ‘Civilization’ when he observes that the skunk’s track he is following ‘leads straight across-country, as if its maker had hitched his wagon to a star and dropped the reins’. ‘Escudilla’ laments in hindsight the killing by a government trapper of the Southwest’s last grizzly, who lived in the wilds of that mountain. The piece ends with an *understatement*: ‘Escudilla still hangs on the horizon, but when you see it you no longer think of bear. It’s only a mountain now’ (Leopold, 1949: 137). In ‘Illinois Bus Ride’, after observing the apparent prosperity of a modern, ‘clean’ farm, where ‘[e]ven the pigs look solvent’, Leopold (1949: 119) concludes his observation with a couple of *rhetorical questions*: ‘Just who is solvent? For how long?’

In *Sustainability*, Norton (2005: 66) comments (without citation) that ‘J. Baird Callicott, who has publicly doubted that Leopold has [P]ragmatist leanings, has also publicly ridiculed the idea that Leopold relied on the work of Hadley, arguing that the use of the [P]ragmatic definition was “ironically” intended. This is a bit of an odd claim, in that people usually state things ironically when they think they are true!’ After the first definition of *irony* in *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th edition, ‘a pretense of ignorance’ (which is identified as ‘Socratic irony’), the second definition is ‘the use of words to express something other than and esp. the opposite of the literal meaning’. People do not usually state things ironically when they think they are true. On the contrary, people usually state things ironically when they think they are false. That, we contend, is exactly what Leopold does in ‘Some Fundamentals’ when he writes, ‘(How happy a definition is that one of Hadley’s which states, “Truth is that which prevails in the long run”!)’.

Many beliefs that prevail in long run are not true – among them the belief that one’s own ethnic group is the pinnacle of creation for whom a land was made. The context in which the invocation of Hadley occurs: the mutually contradictory belief of each succeeding ethnic group (Anazasi, Pueblo, Spanish, Anglo-American) in the Southwest to be the pinnacle of creation for whom the region was made); the use of the word *happy* (indicating that the definition is fatuous); the exclamation-point punctuation; the enclosure in parentheses – all scream irony.

In *Sustainability* Norton (2005: 66) provides evidence that on a previous occasion Leopold (mis)reported Hadley’s definition of *right* (as *truth*) in a non-ironic, commending way. He quotes accurately the first paragraph of the unpublished typescript of ‘The Civic Life of Albuquerque’:

It is something of a platitude to say that in each succeeding century, human society has evolved one or more new ideas, which our ancestors then proceeded to write, speak, argue, fight, and die about, to the end that said idea might be proven or disproven, – adopted or discarded. When an idea has been tried by fire and adopted, it is known as Truth. So firmly has this evolutionary characteristic of Truth been established that one of our modern philosophers – President Hadley of Yale – now defines the truth as “that which prevails in the long run.”

Note that Leopold does not here enclose *truth* within the quotation marks, as he later does in ‘Some Fundamentals’. This scruple suggests to us that Leopold well knew that Hadley had defined *right* not *truth*, but that truth was what Leopold wanted to talk about to the members of the Albuquerque Woman’s Club. Note also the violent language ‘argue, fight, and die about’ – which is quite in the spirit of Hadley’s Social Darwinism. To take a contemporary example, that ‘There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet’ will be the truth if the Islamic jihadists win their fight to prevail over Western civilisation, according to Hadley’s conception of truth, as Leopold here represents it. The care with placing the quotation marks and the evocation of violent struggle between competing ideas and the peoples whose ideas they are might indicate that Leopold had *Some Influences of Modern Philosophic Thought* either fresh in his mind as he composed his address or even that he had it before him as he wrote. In any case, this mention of Hadley and his definition of *right* (as *truth*) is just as clearly *not* ironic as the mention of it in ‘Some Fundamentals’ clearly *is* ironic.

Leopold’s address to the Albuquerque Woman’s Club was, however, delivered during an odd interregnum in Leopold’s life. In 1918, he quit the Forest Service and accepted a job as Secretary of the Albuquerque

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Chamber of Commerce. After only a year in that – for him – strange job, Leopold returned to the employ of the Forest Service. Among his successful Chamber-of-Commerce projects was ‘the removal of all the cotton-bearing female cottonwoods in the city’; he also recommended – fortunately, without success – ‘draining the Rio Grande valley to aid agriculture’ (Meine, 1988: 165, 167). That same year, 1918, Leopold published an essay titled ‘The Popular Wilderness Fallacy: An Idea that Is Fast Exploding’. In it, he belittled the need for wilderness preservation – the popular wilderness *fallacy* – especially as habitat for ‘game’.

In the next decade, however, Leopold’s would become one of the most ardent voices for wilderness preservation. And, as a matter of fact, in Leopold’s very first article *advocating* wilderness preservation, published in 1921, we find a third invocation of what he offered up as Hadley’s definition of *truth*: ‘It is quite possible that the serious discussion of this question [wilderness preservation] will seem a far cry in some unsettled regions and rank heresy to some minds. Likewise did timber conservation seem a far cry in some regions, and rank heresy to some minds of a generation ago. “The truth is that which prevails in the long run”’ (Leopold, 1991d: 79).

Note that here *truth* is part of the putative quotation, which suggests to us that Leopold is here quoting from memory now gone a bit stale. This mention of Hadley’s definition of *right* (as *truth*) may or may not be ironic, depending on how it is read. To many of the generation prior to Leopold’s, timber conservation appeared to be absurd. Then, to many in Leopold’s own generation, wilderness preservation appears to be absurd. Because timber conservation was a relatively new idea and wilderness preservation was a radically new idea in 1921, those who think that they are absurd must hold a true belief – because truth is that which prevails in the long run and anti-conservation and anti-preservation beliefs have prevailed much longer than pro-conservation and pro-preservation beliefs. Give us that old time dominionistic religion! It was the belief that preserved our fathers, so it’s good enough for us! That’s the ironic reading. Or the passage might be read this way: A generation ago timber conservation appeared to be a far cry and rank heresy. Now it is widely accepted and will continue to be so indefinitely. Timber conservation is true because, by Hadley’s definition of *truth*, it *will* prevail in the long run. Similarly, we may expect, by way of analogy, that wilderness preservation will soon be widely accepted and prevail in the long run – and so be true.

That the latter, non-ironic reading of Leopold’s misquotation of Hadley’s definition of *right* in the 1921 wilderness article is the correct reading is suggested by the epigram to the 1924 wilderness-bulletin typescript, which

reads “‘The Truth is that which prevails in the long run.’ – Hadley’.² There is no argumentative context, as there is in the wilderness article, for this fourth occurrence of what Leopold represented to be Hadley’s definition of *truth*. But why would Leopold use it for the epigram of a wilderness newsletter if he did not endorse it? The wilderness bulletin is undated and unsigned, but Leopold is identified as its ‘editor’ and is undoubtedly also its author. We have narrowed the time of its composition down to between the last three months of 1924 and first three of 1925. The bulletin includes a long extract from an article by William B. Greeley (then Chief of the Forest Service) that was published in October 1924; and among the *articles pending publication* are listed Leopold’s own ‘Conserving the Covered Wagon’, which was published in March 1925.³

That this evidently approving misquotation of Hadley’s definition of *right* occurs in late 1924 or early 1925, a year or so *after* Leopold’s evidently ridiculing misquotation of it in 1923 may be explained by its context and audience. The context is the ideological and political – albeit not armed – *struggle* for wilderness preservation. The bulletin was sent to seventeen ‘Workers for Wilderness Areas’, all but four of them federal employees and most of those employed by the Forest Service. The editor encourages his wilderness-minded comrades with the words of ‘Col.’ Greeley, which includes this allusion to Pinchot’s utilitarian motto: ‘I think we can all agree that *the greatest good of the greatest number* of American citizens *in the long run* does require that in their own National Forests there should be preserved some bits of unspoiled wilderness where the young America of the future can take to the outdoors in the right way.’⁴ (We trust that Norton will not claim that Greeley is also ‘invoking Hadley’s’ definition of *truth* or *right*, instead of Pinchot’s famous motto, when he uses the phrase ‘in the long run’.)

To say that Leopold reverted, in the 1924 wilderness bulletin, to the official Forest-Service conservation philosophy of Pinchot would be misleading. Rather, more likely, Leopold was just beginning to think about an alternative to that philosophy in 1923 – and, in that more reflective context, he mocked Hadley – but found Hadley’s definition of *right* (as *truth*), as useful in 1924/25 for purposes of wilderness-preservation propaganda as he found it to be in 1921. Leopold was, as we began by saying, a pragmatist, skilled at addressing various audiences in terms of their worldviews and associated values. But again, that is not evidence that Leopold was also a devotee of Pragmatism generally and a *life-long* exponent, more particularly, of Hadley’s epistemology.

Over the three years between 1918 and 1921, Leopold’s thinking fully and unambiguously reversed itself on the value of wilderness preservation.

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‘By 1922’, according to Meine (1988: 198), Leopold also ‘was now opposed ... to the unnecessary draining of river basins’. As well, he reversed himself – over however long a period, we do not know – on cottonwood removal, for which we have Leopold’s own poignant prose as witness. He opens ‘Illinois Bus Ride’ by describing

A farmer and his son ... out in the yard, pulling a crosscut saw through the innards of an ancient cottonwood. The tree is so large and so old that only a foot of blade is left to pull on. ... It is the best historical library short of the State College, but once a year it sheds cotton on the farmer’s window screens. Of these two facts, only the second is important (Leopold, 1949: 117).

The last sentence, incidentally, is an excellent example of Leopold’s use of irony as an engaging instrument of ridicule. Norton’s argument in *Sustainability* that Leopold was guided by Hadley’s definition of *right* (as *truth*) over his entire career as a conservationist is as persuasive as the following analogous argument. We know that in 1918 Leopold, as Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, recommended ridding the city of Albuquerque of its cottonwood trees. And we can be sure that throughout the remainder of his life, Leopold continued to believe that we should rid our yards of cottonwoods. As evidence, we have *Sand County*’s ‘Illinois Bus Ride’ in which Leopold praises a farmer and his son whom he observed cutting down a cottonwood in their yard because of the singularly important fact that it sheds cotton on their window screens.

Regarding Norton’s defence in *Sustainability* of his claim in ‘Constancy’ that in ‘Some Fundamentals’ Leopold espoused Hadley’s definition of *truth* (actually *right*) as ‘that which prevails in the long run’, we conclude as follows. Leopold certainly treated Hadley with respect and adapted Hadley’s definition of *right* to his own thinking about truth in 1918. He cursorily and casually invoked that definition in the context of wilderness preservation in 1921 and 1924, which he was then justifying in the instrumentalist and utilitarian terms of Pinchot’s philosophy of conservation. But in 1923, as he was beginning to think outside the Forest-Service intellectual box about an alternative organismic and non-anthropocentric philosophy of conservation, he unmistakably mocked Hadley and ridiculed his misremembered definition of *right* (as *truth*). What Leopold thought of Hadley’s definition of *truth* in 1918 is an unreliable indication of what he thought of it in 1923 and, certainly, what he thought of it much later in his career. Indeed, there is good reason to suppose that Leopold’s thinking in 1918 was at odds with his subsequent thinking about a lot of things – wilderness preservation, cottonwood removal, wetland draining, Pinchot’s mechanistic, anthropocentric instrumentalist utilitarianism, and Hadley’s epistemology salient among them.

4. NORTON'S INTERPRETATION OF LEOPOLD AS A FELLOW PRAGMATIST: 1991

In *Toward Unity Among Environmentalists*, Norton's interpretation of Leopold as a Pragmatist is muted and concedes much to the classic interpretation of Leopold, first developed by Flader (1974). There, Norton even seems to endorse certain details of Flader's account: that, for example, the pivotal moment in Leopold's life came in the mid-1930s, precipitated by two trips to other countries – to Germany in 1935 and to Mexico in 1936. In Germany, Leopold saw the logical end-point of the ruthlessly utilitarian Pinchot management paradigm—an over-managed, biologically impoverished environment (Flader, 1974; Meine, 1988). Of the Sierra Madre mountains of Mexico, Leopold (1987: 285–286, emphasis added) writes, 'It was here that I first realized that *land is an organism*, that all my life I had seen only sick land, whereas here was a biota still in perfect aboriginal health.'

In *Toward Unity*, to be sure, Norton provides a précis of his account in 'Constancy' of Hadley's influence on Leopold's thinking. But there is a subtle difference. In *Toward Unity* he emphasises Hadley's Social Darwinist notion that natural selection operates on cultures, such that, 'If a culture uses up the land and extinguishes itself, it is refuted in the concrete world of history, even if it cannot be refuted in the abstract world of philosophy and systematic worldviews' (Norton, 1991: 41) (Actually, Hadley has nothing to say about the relationship of cultures to land, only to one another as zero-sum competitors in the struggle for existence.) Norton concedes that Leopold 'preferred the organicist metaphor and that he believed this metaphor led to a deeper love and respect for the land'. Norton even concedes that Leopold ascribed 'inherent' as well as instrumental value to land. What makes Leopold a Pragmatist, in the Hadleyan mould, according to Norton in *Toward Unity*, is that Leopold did not hold such a worldview and ethic as an '*a priori*' set of beliefs about which he was 'dogmatic'. Nor would we disagree. No one, as far as we are aware, has ever asserted that an organismic worldview and a non-anthropocentric land ethic are true *a priori*, nor, certainly, that Leopold himself ever thought so.

In *Toward Unity*, Norton seems to suggest that the epistemological alternatives for philosophical worldviews are starkly contrasting. We have but two choices: (a) we may regard a worldview, such as the evolutionary-ecological worldview (what Norton calls the 'organic metaphor'), to be 'self-evident', discovered '*a priori*', and 'independent of culture'; or (b) we may regard such a worldview to be true (or right) according to Hadley's

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definition – namely, that which prevails in the long run – because it enables the culture that believes in it to survive and flourish:

Organicism was attractive to Leopold in 1923, and in 1948, as an insightful and fruitful guiding metaphor. But the metaphor, without necessarily being established as *literally or a priori true*, can still guide policy. ... In the Darwinian sense [that is, as Hadley understood Darwin], in which cultures have found the truth if their practices are adaptive and the culture survives, the organic metaphor can guide us to the truth. But that is *not a truth independent of culture*, a truth that can be used *dogmatically* as a stick to beat the culture into accepting moral imperatives independent of it. ...

Leopold ... rather recognized that, in the absence of an *a priori, self-evident* standard of what is right and good in management, the manager must develop a notion of the good life and simultaneously implement it. Organicism, while no more the *self-evident* standard than Pinchot's utilitarian formula, provides a useful governing metaphor (Norton, 1991: 59, emphasis added).

An epistemological mean lies between (a) the Cartesian extreme of *a priori*, self-evident, truth and (b) the putatively Pragmatic extreme of a good guiding metaphor whose 'truth' is determined by the practical success of behaviour guided by it. The mean between these two extremes is the epistemology of science. The theory of evolution, for example, remains a body of theory, not a body of fact, because we cannot directly observe events that happened in the pre-human past. The theory of evolution, however, is true, we believe, in its general claim that extant and extinct species emerged gradually over time – by natural selection along with a bit of random genetic drift and good luck. We believe it is true not because we think it is self-evident, nor was it reached by *a priori* thought, but because it better organises and explains observable facts. Among those facts are the existence of the fossil remains of extinct species, a generic animal body plan with myriads of variation, and, latterly, the analysis and comparison of the genomes of various existing species.

And what about a worldview being true or false independent of culture? One might make a case that the arguably *a priori* and self-evident propositions of mathematics are true independent of culture. But evolutionary biology and science generally are products of culture. It is hard to even make sense of the suggestion that *worldviews* are true or false *independent of culture*. Further, if some members of a culture cling to obsolete worldviews – such as an anthropocentric pre-Darwinian worldview – that only indicates that the newer and more tenable non-anthropocentric evolutionary-ecological worldview

has not entirely supplanted its precursors – for whatever reason, but most often, it seems Leopold thought, because of religious intransigence.

And to what or to whom does Norton refer when he writes of moral philosophy as a ‘stick to beat the culture into accepting moral imperatives independent of it’? All moral philosophers, certainly Leopold included, develop arguments designed to *persuade* the fellow-members of their cultures to abandon old worldviews and their associated values – however formerly serviceable – and adopt new ones, not to force a culture into accepting moral imperatives independent of it. Philosophers – *pace* Plato – are not, nor are they likely ever to be, kings.

Surely, the only criterion for the truth of cultural beliefs, including moral beliefs, cannot be that they enable a culture to survive for a long run. If so, one must conclude that spectacularly long-running cultures, such as the Roman Empire, espouse true moral beliefs – imperatives condoning slavery, gladiatorial contests, orgies (both lustful and gluttonous), imperial government, brutal military conquest and subjugation. Nor did Rome eventually fall because such beliefs ceased to preserve it, as the fall of Rome came after the emperor Constantine abandoned them for what Nietzsche called the slave morality of Christianity. Surely also, one can claim that a worldview and an associated ethic is more than just a guiding metaphor without claiming that it is self-evidently and *a priori* true independent of culture. One can claim that if not absolutely and finally true, the organismic evolutionary-ecological worldview is demonstrably a more tenable worldview than any other available alternative – because it is a worldview based on scientific theories that coherently organise and explain all the relevant observable facts better than any other available alternative. And, correlatively, one can claim that the non-anthropocentric land ethic is more persuasive than the anthropocentric and instrumentalist conservation ethic of Pinchot because it is grounded in a more tenable worldview.

Further, the organismic evolutionary-ecological worldview and the associated non-anthropocentric land ethic are not true because, if widely adopted, they will enable our culture to survive and flourish. Rather, they would, should they become the prevailing worldview and associated environmental ethic of our culture, better guide it *because they are true*. In the only place that the words *true(er)* and *long run* occur in the same paragraph of Leopold’s writings, other than the four instances between 1918 and 1924/25, Leopold makes just this point.⁵ In a typescript dated August 2, 1943, titled ‘What Is a Weed?’, Leopold (1991g: 309, emphasis added) writes

It seems to me that both agriculture and conservation are in the process of inner conflict. Each has an ecological school of land-use, and what I may

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call an iron-heel school. If it be a fact that *the former is the truer*, then both have a common problem constructing an ecological land-practice. Thus, and not otherwise, will one cease to contradict the other. Thus, and not otherwise, will either prosper *in the long run*.

Simply put, agriculture and conservation will cease to contradict each other and both will prosper in the long run, *if based on the truer ecological worldview*. As it is, the false militantly anthropocentric mechanistic worldview (which is what 'iron-heel' connotes) leads to the mutual contradiction of conservation and agriculture and to the failure of both in the long run. In short, harmony and success are the fruits of true belief, rather than the other way around, as Hadley would have it.

5. NORTON'S INTERPRETATION OF LEOPOLD AS A FELLOW PRAGMATIST: 2005

In sharp contrast to his muted and conciliatory interpretation of Leopold as a Pragmatist in *Toward Unity*, Norton's interpretation of Leopold as a Pragmatist in *Sustainability* is categorical. According to Norton (2005: 65, emphasis added), in 'Some Fundamentals', Leopold 'considered nonanthropocentric moral principles as a basis for conservation *only to reject them ...*', while in 'Constancy' and *Toward Unity*, Norton, as noted, concedes that Leopold personally espoused a non-anthropocentric environmental ethic, but, as any pragmatic person would, as well made the case for conservation policies to his contemporaries on the basis of their anthropocentric worldview and values.

Leopold based the land ethic on Darwin's analysis of 'the moral sense' in *The Descent of Man* (Callicott, 1987). He indicates his debt to Darwin by way of allusion. Leopold opens the essay by evoking the swathe of time from Odysseus's day down to our own, and notes that 'During the three thousand years which have since elapsed, ethical criteria have been extended to many fields of conduct, with corresponding shrinkages in those judged by expediency only.' Then he goes on to claim that

This extension of ethics, so far studied only by philosophers, is actually a process in ecological *evolution*. Its sequences may be described in ecological as well as in philosophical terms. An ethic, ecologically, is a limitation on freedom of action in the *struggle for existence*. An ethic, philosophically, is a differentiation of social from antisocial conduct. These are two definitions of one thing. The thing has its origin in the tendency of interdependent

individuals or groups to *evolve* modes of co-operation. The ecologist calls these symbioses (Leopold, 1949: 202, emphasis added).

Norton (2005: 70), however, alleges that Leopold's essentially Darwinian account of the 'extension of ethics' was garnered from his reading of Hadley, not from Leopold's reading of *The Descent of Man*: 'Based on Leopold's exposure to, and adoption of, Hadley's "model" for social adaptation and group learning, and based on the echoes of this early Darwinian approach to ethics in the final version of his land ethic' In other words, Leopold echoes Hadley in 'The Land Ethic'; he does not allude directly to Darwin. For this interpretation, Norton provides no documentary evidence except Leopold's two mentions of Hadley and his definition of *right* (as *truth*) in 1918 and 1923.

Note too that by 2005, Norton claims that Leopold has not just adopted Hadley's epistemology but also his entire "'model" for social adaptation and group learning'. According to Norton, Hadley differed from his fellow Social Darwinist, Herbert Spencer, in conceiving the struggle for existence to take place not among individuals in a given society, but among different societies with different worldviews. That's true, but there is more we need to know about Hadley's Social Darwinist 'model' than Norton reveals. What we actually find in Hadley's *Some Influences in Modern Philosophic Thought*, is a repugnant form of jingoist nationalism that reads for all the world like a manifesto for today's American radical right. It emphasises competition among nations with winners and losers; it is stridently anti-intellectual; and it politicises religion. Here is a sample of what Hadley (1913: 72) has to say:

In the lower forms of animal life where the struggle is between individuals, the plant or the animal that survives is the one we call the best, because it is best adapted to its purpose. As we come higher up in the scale the struggle is no longer between individuals but between families, between groups, and ultimately between different systems of ethics. It is no longer the most perfectly developed individual, but the most perfectly organized group or the most perfectly harmonized system that prevails and thereby proves its right to prevail.

Hadley emphasises struggle between groups, and the *prevailing* of one group over its competitors. Without a tinge of regret or compassion, Hadley (1913: 33) observes that 'Looking back over the record of human history as far as we can trace it, we see that the savage was gradually crowded out by the civilized man.' Leopold and Darwin, by contrast, emphasise integration, cooperation, and symbiosis among groups. Darwin (1874: 126-127, empha-

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sis added), for example, envisions a global village beyond nationalism; he pleads for unification not push-come-to-shove displacement and for racial and ethnic tolerance and a tolerance for cultural differences:

As man advances in civilization, and *small tribes are united* into larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all the members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him. This point being once reached, there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the *men of all nations and races*. If, indeed, such men are separated from him by great differences of appearance or habits, experience unfortunately shows us how long it is, before we look at them as our fellow creatures.

It was upon Darwin's generous ecumenicism and universalism, not Hadley's pugnacious tribalism and nationalism that Leopold (1949: 204) built the land ethic: 'The land ethic simply [further] enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.'

Among the eclectic chapters of Hadley's *Some Influences* is one innocuously titled 'The Spiritual Basis of Recent Poetry'. It turns out, however, to be a prose paean to militarism and aggression: 'The poetry of the early part of the nineteenth century, whatever its merits, makes no pretense of summoning the reader to vigorous action as a man. ... Neither Wordsworth nor Scott has a definite message to the fighting men of the present. Wordsworth's message is to the men of the present who are not fighting, Scott's to the fighting men who are not of the present' (Hadley, 1913: 88–89). Hadley's anti-intellectualism, moreover, is stunning and, along with his militarism, reminds us of a contemporary self-described 'decider' who consults his 'gut' in taking foreign policy decisions, rather than soliciting a wide spectrum of advice and weighing it intelligently:

The surest knowledge, according to the [P]ragmatist, is that which has been thus established by the habit of generations until it becomes intuitive. Reasoning is of the nature of exploration. If we have to reason, it means there is an absence of consensus of opinion among our fellows, and probably an absence of certainty in our own minds. I think it possible that every thoroughgoing [P]ragmatist ten years hence will say that what we know we know by instinct, and the use of the intellect is a confession of ignorance (Hadley, 1913: 74).

For Hadley, as for the contemporary radical conservative, we should act instinctively not rationally when deciding policy and action. It is no wonder that the thoughtful, ever reasoning, Leopold, if he was ever attracted to

Hadley's 'philosophy', ultimately turned to ridiculing and mocking it with the most sarcastic irony that he could muster – and then, for the rest of his long career as a conservationist, ignoring it.

There is, further, another kind of irony at play in Norton's happy association of Leopold with Hadley. Norton, as we have shown, vigorously protests the idea that there are any *a priori* and self-evident truths and values, although no environmental philosopher with which we are acquainted claims to be in possession of them. Hadley (1913: 114–115, emphasis added), however, declares that there are 'innate ideas' – *a priori* truths, by another name:

There are certain ideas or prejudices which we accept without proof and take as starting points in our reasoning. ... I know of no better name by which to call these assumptions than the old and somewhat abused term innate ideas. They are based on inherited habits of action and thought, which have lasted throughout so many generations that they have become unconscious if not instinctive. They represent prejudices rather than reasoned judgments regarding the universe; and they exemplify in a striking degree that *superiority of prejudice over reason* which Burke so cogently set forth.

Hadley's philosophy is the very antithesis of Leopold's. Hadley is anti-intellectual, politically and religiously conservative, and ruthless – if not in regard to utilitarianism, then certainly in regard to the struggle for existence, which he understood to be a zero-sum contest among 'kinds' of humans (races, in other words) and societies: 'You like one kind of man and one kind of institution; I like another kind of man or another kind of institution. Very well; let us set to work to discover which, in the long run is going to *prevail over the other*. That which will prevail in the long run must be right' (Hadley, 1913: 129). That's repugnant. Judaeo-Christian Euro-American industrial capitalism über alles!

6. CONCLUSION

One wonders how the inveterately thoughtful and forward-looking Leopold could ever have been attracted to Hadley's ugly philosophy, as he seems to have been in 1918. The only explanation we can suggest is that by 1918 the United States had entered World War I and, in the dark days of that struggle, the dark Social Darwinism of Hadley might have seemed appealing. After the war, and after Leopold rejoined the Forest Service, he came to his senses and, within a period of five years, he had begun to treat Hadley's vicious, reactionary ideas with the contempt they deserve. Leopold soon forgot all about Hadley and his epistemology, as indicated by the fact that

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any mention of Hadley and his putative definition of *truth* disappears altogether from Leopold's writings after 1924. Norton, however, allows his virtually speculative association of Leopold with Hadley to become fixed in his imagination. Such an association is based on the scantiest documentary evidence: two mentions of Hadley and his definition of *right* (as *truth*) by Leopold, one in a 1918 talk and the other in a 1923 manuscript (the latter actually representing countervailing evidence, given its obvious irony). Further, we find two additional quotations of Leopold's own rendition of Hadley's definition of *right* (as *truth*), one with no mention of Hadley, in two pieces of wilderness propaganda, both cast in terms of Pinchot's militantly anthropocentric instrumentalist philosophy of conservation. In these two places Leopold quotes both Hadley's definition and Pinchot's motto, indicating that Leopold closely associated the two – perhaps because *the long run* is a phrase common to both. When Leopold abandoned Pinchot's philosophy of conservation, he also abandoned Hadley's epistemology.

Nonetheless, in *Sustainability*, Norton (2005: 128–129) writes as if Leopold were a card-carrying Hadleyan Pragmatist: 'In the true spirit of [P]ragmatism, Leopold apparently rejected the troubling dichotomy between fact and value and adopted the unified "logic" of experience endorsed by [P]ragmatists such as Dewey and Hadley.' Moreover, Norton writes as if Leopold were, like Hadley, also a card-carrying Social Darwinist. Norton even writes as if Hadley were, like Leopold, a dedicated conservationist – for which there is absolutely no evidence in *Some Influences*. Most misleadingly, he writes as if the two were actually collaborators in a common effort to achieve environmental sustainability: 'So Leopold and Hadley, at least, understood human survival in a place as a matter of cultural survival over many generations, a process they viewed as driven by Darwinian selection applied to groups' (Norton, 2005: 122).

By dint of repetition, Norton's representation of Leopold as a Hadleyan Pragmatist is beginning to gain some traction in the scholarly community. Gary Varner (1998: 131), for example, declares that 'Norton's interpretation of Leopold fits Leopold's literary corpus nicely' – an impression we hope to have dispelled here – 'and is grounded squarely on the details of Leopold's life at Yale and as a professional land manager'. In the course of his endorsement of Norton's interpretation of Leopold, Varner quotes Hadley, but his source is not Hadley's *Some Influences* (or any of Hadley's other writings); it is, rather, Norton's quotations from *Some Influences* in 'Constancy'. Donald Snow (1999: 192–193, emphasis added) writes, 'The empiricist in him [Leopold] was *terribly fond*, after all, of a proclamation by Arthur Twining Hadley, a political economist who served as President

of Yale when Leopold attended its Forest School. “The criterion which shows whether a thing is right or wrong,” wrote Hadley, “is its permanence. Survival is not merely a characteristic of the right; it is a test of the right.” Snow’s source, as Varner’s, is Norton’s ‘Constancy’. Julianne Lutz Newton opens a section, ‘The Test of the Right’ in a chapter, ‘Ecological Poetry’, in her book, *Aldo Leopold’s Odyssey*, by quoting Leopold’s 1921 rendition of Hadley’s definition of *right* (as *truth*). She goes on to write, ‘It is difficult to tell how much of Hadley’s philosophic work Leopold knew directly, but on the elusive, vital concepts of truth and rightness, Leopold shared the [P]ragmatist’s general view’ (Newton 2006: 233). To her scholarly credit, Newton is not relying on Norton as her sole source for Hadley’s philosophy; indeed, she later quotes from a work of Hadley’s with which Norton indicates no familiarity (Newton 2006: 237–238; 413, n. 83). Nevertheless, she acknowledges Norton’s ‘Constancy’ as the source of her initial interest in the influence of Hadley on Leopold.

In an otherwise probative and often critical review of *Sustainability*, Piers Stephens (2007: 388, emphasis added) accepts Norton’s claim that Leopold was a lifelong disciple of Hadley’s without exception: ‘Norton *demonstrates, surely correctly*, that the temporal emphases and criteria of cultural success in Leopold’s thought were deeply influenced by the [P]ragmatism he drew from the Yale University president and William James follower Arthur Twining Hadley.’ For his summary judgment of the correctness of Norton’s ‘demonstration’ of the influence of Hadley on Leopold, Stephens appears to rely solely on the authority of Norton; certainly he offers no corroborative evidence of his own discovery. The only scholar of whom we are aware who draws a connection between Leopold and Hadley independently of Norton is Craufurd D. Goodwin, who, like Snow, an economist, correctly treats Hadley as a fellow economist, not as an actual Pragmatist philosopher, and speculates about his influence on Leopold’s thinking about economics, not epistemology. Goodwin (2008: 430) sheds some interesting light on the Hadley-Leopold connection at Yale:

In the 1890s Hadley ... taught a large introductory class that emphasized the principle of natural selection as the explanation for economic growth, and marginal utility doctrine as the explanation for individual behavior.... By the end of the decade this was the most popular course in the College. Although Hadley had moved on to become president of Yale by the time Leopold arrived, students continued to learn their economics from Hadley’s popular textbook *Economics: An Account of the Relations between Private Property and Public Welfare*.

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We scanned and searched Hadley's textbook on economics, first published in 1896, for the definition of *truth* that Leopold attributed to Hadley, on the chance that that's where Leopold might have got it and accurately quoted it – but it was not to be found there. We also searched other promising titles by Hadley, *Baccalaureate Addresses: And Other Talks on Kindred Themes*, published in 1907, and *Standards of Public Morality*, published in 1908, but found no such definition there either. Apparently Hadley acquired a taste for Pragmatist epistemology after 1908, one year shy of Leopold's departure from Yale, for in none of these works does Hadley endorse or expound upon that philosophy. Thus, we are inclined to agree with Goodwin, as opposed to Varner, that *while in residence at Yale*, Leopold would have been acquainted with Hadley only as a political economist, not a Pragmatist, and, of course, as president of the university.

Norton's interpretation of Leopold's philosophy in *Sustainability* is a many-splendoured thing, but it has lost touch with the evidentiary record – and thus it has lost all touch with historical reality. Norton has ginned up – out of practically nothing – a close intellectual, even collaborative relationship between Leopold and Hadley. And, by dint of reiteration and elaboration, he is spinning that putative relationship into the prevailing legend of Leopold. If he succeeds in that endeavour – and Varner (1998), Snow (1999), Newton (2006) and Stephens (2007) accept it as fact, to say nothing of Minter (2006) – then the story of that relationship must be a true story. For, after all, 'Truth is that which prevails in the long run'!

NOTES

¹ See the Appendix: Materials, Methods, and Results for details of Leopold's references in his literary remains to Hadley and other *Pragmatists*, to *Pragmatism/pragmatism* and to *truth* and *long run* and to such references in Meine's biography of Leopold.

² 'The Wilderness Bulletin', Winn Papers, 1902–1942, box 6, f.41. Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.

³ In a section of the bulletin titled 'Reference Material' and subtitled 'Published Articles', the author lists "'Game & Our National Forests,' W.B. Greeley, Bull. Amer. C.P.A., Oct. 1924, p. 8.'" and in a section titled 'Articles Pending Publication', the author lists "'Conserving the Covered Wagon", Aldo Leopold, *Sunset Magazine*', which was published in *Sunset Magazine* 54 (3): 21, 56 in March 1925.

⁴ Quoted from 'The Wilderness Bulletin', p. 2, (emphasis added).

⁵ See Table 1 in the Appendix.

APPENDIX: MATERIALS, METHODS AND RESULTS

We searched the following published works of Aldo Leopold by keyword: *Report on a Game Survey of the North-Central States* (1931); *Game Management* (1933); *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (1949); *Round River: From the Journals of Aldo Leopold* (1953); *Aldo Leopold's Southwest* (1990); *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays by Aldo Leopold* (1991); *For the Health of the Land: Previously Unpublished Essays and Other Writings* (1999); and *The Essential Aldo Leopold: Quotations and Commentaries* (1999) – all either scanned as pdf files and searched using Adobe Professional, or as etexts searched using NetLibrary. We also scanned and searched *Aldo Leopold: His Life and Work*, by Curt Meine using Adobe Professional. For Leopold's unpublished works, including papers, reports, notebooks, journals and personal correspondence, we searched the digitised portion of the Leopold Archives, which is publicly accessible through the University of Wisconsin Steenbock Library (<http://digioll.library.wisc.edu/AldoLeopold/>). The archival material has now been posted online in two forms: (1) photocopies of documents, which have (2) been transcribed and posted as searchable text. We searched for the following keywords: *pragmatism*, *pragmatist*, *truth*, *long run*, *Hadley*, *Dewey*, *James*, *Peirce*. Then, upon finding one of these keywords, we examined its context for relevance to the question that is the title of this essay, 'Was Aldo Leopold a Pragmatist?' In this way, we were able to survey the greater part of an expansive literary corpus efficiently and effectively. Additional information was graciously provided by Meine and Ben Minter, a former student of Norton, via email. The authors coordinated their research using Blackboard, a web-based communication tool designed for American educational institutions.

In none of Leopold's published works do the terms *pragmatism* and *pragmatist* occur. Space here does not permit a detailed analysis of every occurrence of *truth* or of *long run* in Leopold's published writings. Except for 'Some Fundamentals of Conservation in the Southwest' and 'The Wilderness in Forest Recreational Policy', the many occurrences of the word *truth* and *long run* in Leopold's published writings, have nothing to do with any definition of Hadley's or any other epistemological theories of any other Pragmatist or of Pragmatism generally. To verify this at a glance note that occurrences of *truth* and *long run* occur on the same page only once in *Game Management* (p. 230) – in two different paragraphs; once in *Aldo Leopold's Southwest* (p. 148) in which 'The Wilderness in Forest Recreational Policy' is reprinted; twice in *The River of the Mother of God* (pp. 79 and 96) in which, respectively, 'The Wilderness in Forest Recreational Policy'

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TABLE 1. Occurrence of selected terms in Leopold's works

All documents are either pdf files searched by keyword using Adobe Professional or etexts searched by keyword using NetLibrary (<http://www.netlibrary.com/>); numbers are page numbers; — means nothing found; texts consisting of editors' introductions, comments, notes, indexes, etc. have been omitted.

Texts	Terms						
	pragmatism, pragmatist	truth	long run	Hadley	Dewey	James	Pierce
<i>Report on a Game Survey of the North-Central States</i> (1931) [pdf]	—	58	61, 101, 176, 266	—	—	—	—
<i>Game Management</i> (1933) [pdf]	—	41, 58, 118, 152, 230, 324, 404, 422	83, 211, 230, 244, 396, 405, 406	—	—	—	—
<i>A Sand County Almanac</i> (1949) [pdf]	—	ix, 23, 58, 107, 111	133	—	—	—	—
<i>Round River</i> (1953) [pdf]	—	3, 167, 172	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Aldo Leopold's Southwest</i> (1990) [NetLibrary]	—	21, 114, 148, 191, 234, 241, 246, 247	146, 148, 168	—	—	—	—
<i>The River of the Mother of God</i> (1991) [NetLibrary]	—	43, 79, 91, 96, 105, 134, 202, 209, 228, 258, 317	78, 79, 88, 96, 109, 127, 131, 152, 154, 197, 252, 285, 309, 319, 342	96	—	—	—
<i>For the Health of the Land</i> (1999) [pdf]	—	74, 96, 106, 145, 166	78, 96, 156, 212	—	—	—	—
<i>The Essential Aldo Leopold: Quotations and Commentaries</i> (1999) [pdf]	—	12, 24, 54, 88, 109, 136, 209, 213, 241, 246, 258, 259, 280, 286, 290, 303, 321, 325	12, 14, 96, 103, 106, 113, 141, 174, 186, 191, 198, 213, 233, 241, 242	241	—	—	—
Curt Meine, <i>Aldo Leopold: His Life and Work</i> (1988) [NetLibrary]	526	29, 63, 66, 69, 82, 112, 174, 189, 197, 221, 257, 279, 309, 344, 359, 363, 393, 444, 454, 478, 500, 503, 520, 572	77, 197, 207, 354, 371, 383, 414, 459, 465, 475, 515	556	481	160, 547	—

and ‘Some Fundamentals of Conservation in the Southwest’ are reprinted; once in *For the Health of the Land* (p. 96) – in two different paragraphs; and twice in *The Essential Aldo Leopold* (pp. 12 and 241) – on p. 12 *truth* and *long run* are found in quotations from different sources and on p. 241 the ‘happy ... definition or truth’ attributed to Hadley in ‘Some Fundamentals’ is quoted. *The Essential Aldo Leopold: Quotations and Commentaries* is, as the subtitle would suggest, a collection of quotations from the works of Leopold taken out of context and organised by topic – agriculture, wilderness, economics, etc. – along with introductory essays for each topic by a score of authors (among them Norton and the senior author of this article). The single occurrence of Hadley’s name in *The Essential Aldo Leopold* is found in a quotation, once again, from ‘Some Fundamentals’, to which Norton (1988) first drew attention. We found no other references to Hadley in *Report on a Game Survey of the North-Central States, Game Management, A Sand County Almanac* or in Leopold’s posthumously published essays found in *Round River, Aldo Leopold’s Southwest, The River of the Mother of God* (in which ‘Some Fundamentals’ is reprinted, accounting for the hit in that work) and *For the Health of the Land*. We invite Norton or anyone else to inspect all the pages we list in any of the works we have searched by keyword or to conduct their own keyword search to see if we have ignored any documentary evidence to support the claim that Leopold was influenced by Hadley and that he was adherent of the American Pragmatism school of philosophy.

Our search of the digitised archival material yielded four additional occurrences of the name ‘Hadley’ – one in ‘The Civic Life of Albuquerque’, which Norton (2005) thanks Minter for bringing to his attention. The other three are all on invitations that Leopold received, as a Yale student, in 1907: (i) to a Connecticut Forestry Association meeting in New Haven on 30 January (Hadley is listed as giving a welcoming address at the evening session, for which there is no title on Leopold’s invitation); (ii) to the 14th annual Princeton-Yale Debate on the Yale campus held on 22 March (over which Hadley is listed as presiding officer); (iii) to a Lawrenceville School Alumni Day on 25 May (Hadley is listed as the guest of honor at the luncheon). No other references to pragmatism, pragmatist, Hadley, James, Dewey (with one exception, which we discuss shortly), or Peirce can be found in the unpublished, but now publicly accessible, digitised archival material.

Meine’s estimation of the significance of Hadley’s influence on Leopold’s thought is indicated by the fact that Hadley’s name does not appear in the text of *Aldo Leopold: His Life and Work*, the single occurrence of the name Hadley in that work being found in an endnote (Meine 1988: 556, n. 55).

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Meine (1988: 197) glosses Leopold's rendition of Hadley's definition *right* (as *truth*) – which accounts for the single conjunction of *truth* and *long run* in that book – in 'The Wilderness in Forest Recreational Policy' as 'a quotation from his notebook of favorites' and attributes the quotation to Hadley in the aforementioned associated endnote. In another endnote, Meine (1988: 547, n. 26) explains that Leopold kept a 'Personal Notebook', which

contains quotations that Leopold gleaned from books, articles, the Bible, and other sources. Many of the passages eventually found their way into his own essays and speeches. Leopold seems to have used the notebook most regularly in the 1910s and early 1920s, though he continued to add to and draw from it into the 1930s. The authors cited give some indication of the breadth of Leopold's reading ...

There follows a long list of authors from Aristotle to Izaak Walton, which includes 'William James', but not 'Hadley'. We examined Leopold's 'Personal Notebook' and discovered – to our surprise, because Meine's scholarship is otherwise very reliable – that there is in fact no quotation from Hadley to be found in it. This is the single entry regarding James: '44. "... a spurious idea due to our inveterate human trick of turning names into things" Wm. James – Pragmatism p. 87'.* The phrase quoted from James in Leopold's 'Personal Notebook' is not found in any of Leopold's other writings. Meine mentions William James twice and John Dewey once in the course of a 638-page book. In addition to including James in the long list of authors quoted in Leopold's 'Personal Notebook', Meine (1988: 160) reports in the text that Leopold's reading in 1916 included 'Jefferson, John Stuart Mill, Carlisle [*sic*; i.e., Thomas Carlyle, we must suppose], Butler, Hugo, William James, Kipling, Epicurus, and especially the Bible'.

As to Dewey, Meine (1988: 480–481) reports that in 1947 'Horace Fries, a member of the university's Department of Philosophy, asked him [Leopold] to write a brief conservation platform for a new, idealistically concerned national political party organizing under John Dewey and A. Philip Randolph'. Our digital search of the archives revealed seven pages of material – correspondence, notes, party fliers, and the copy on conservation that Leopold accommodatingly composed for the party's platform – related to this minor

* University of Wisconsin Digital Collections: The Aldo Leopold Archives. Personal Notebook, 9/25/10-7: *Diaries and Journals, Leopold, Aldo Diaries and Journals: United States Forest Service Diaries and Miscellaneous, 1899–1927* ([date unknown]), <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/AldoLeopold/> (accessed 28 May 2009).

episode. No direct correspondence or other forms of communication between Leopold and Dewey were found amongst those papers. Hadley's name does not appear in the index of Meine's biography (nor do the names of James or Dewey), a further indication that Meine regarded the two occurrences of Hadley's name and the mere three occurrences, between 1918 and 1923, of the definition of *truth* that Leopold attributed to Hadley, in all of Leopold's certifiable literary remains, as of little significance.

In the only endnote that refers to Hadley and/or his happy definition in *Aldo Leopold: His Life and Work*, Meine (1988: 556, n. 55) references, in addition to 'The Civic Life of Albuquerque', a 'circular bulletin on wilderness, FWP, Box 5'. The reference is to the Fred Winn Papers, housed at the Tucson Branch of the Arizona Historical Society. Those papers have been (inadvisedly) reorganised and the bulletin is now (mis)located in 'Box 6, f. 41 Wilderness Society 1940–1942'. The Wilderness Society was not formed until 1935. The bulletin uses what Leopold represented as Hadley's definition of truth, attributed to Hadley, as an epigram or header, without comment or context. There is no byline or signature on the bulletin indicating authorship and there is no date. Internal evidence suggests that the author is in fact Leopold and that the date of composition falls between October 1924 and March 1925, indicating a third occurrence of Hadley's name and a fourth of his putative definition of truth in Leopold's literary corpus. Winn was a fellow forest ranger and friend with whom Leopold was acquainted from his first years in the Service, and with whom he discussed the prospects of wilderness preservation in the National Forests during the early 1920s (Meine 1988: 177).

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