

A Just Approach to Climate Change

Humanity's relationship with the environment in our capitalistic society is purely economic. Without profit, there exists no purpose, so humanity destroys to reach an advantage. Ethically, is this fair to the land? Is the capitalistic gain that has led to the rapid progress of climate change fair to the living beings within it?

Aldo Leopold's famous excerpt, "The Land Ethic", from, "A Sand County Almanac," battles this question asking the reader to redefine community and our values. He defines an ethic as, "ecologically,... a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence (Leopold 202)." It is a balance of limiting our capitalistic freedoms to consider our need of the land for survival. Humanity depends on the land for food, water, shelter, and survival. Without our survival, there will be no economy to gain from. Aldo Leopold asks humanity to "[change our] role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it," to "[enlarge] the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land (Leopold 204)." If we view ourselves as one with the land we will be more inclined to protect it, which indirectly is protecting humanity and our ability to strive and grow.

Although the land should be protected by humanity, the land also provides great opportunities for economic growth (natural gas/oil). How should we balance our need for the environment and capitalism? Looking at the environment as part of the community, we can approach economic opportunities through the lens of conservation, "a state of harmony between men and land (Leopold 207)." We should take a utilitarianistic approach to the usage of the environment, (what will negatively affect the community the least), which is conservation. We can take from the land as long as it's right. "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 (Leopold 225)."

As the future of the environment and climate change weighs heavily on humanity's shoulders, the approaches we take should shift from capitalistic to utilitarianistic. Instead of profiting off the Arctic melt to drill oil, we should work towards lowering our carbon emissions and transitioning over to green energy. We should honor our environment and honor Aldo Leopold because that is what is just for humanity and our environment. It is what is just for the community.