

NEW TITLES

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ways: rationally and spiritually. Botkin suggests that we confuse the two and hopes that “this new book helps to clarify this dilemma.” After reading the book, I am still confused. Science provides a widely accepted—and admittedly imperfect—but time-tested method to discover how nature works. Neither organized religions nor personal value systems, neither Leopold’s environmental ethics nor Botkin’s reconsiderations, can provide a universally accepted system of belief to guide our relationships to nature. What is good and should be preserved and what is bad and should be changed will always be subjective and debated. Isn’t this a good thing?

The style of writing and the book’s equal treatment of the scientific and humanistic sides of environmental issues remind me of *A Sand County Almanac* (Leopold 1949). Like Leopold, Botkin introduces topics by presenting vignettes from personal experience. He writes of flying over Venice and thinking about large-scale environmental engineering schemes, of revisiting Isle Royale in Michigan and gaining new insights into predator–prey interactions, and of exploring a water mill in New Hampshire and reflecting on how nature is different from a machine. Unlike Leopold, whose account of the dimming “fierce green fire” in the eyes of a dying wolf is etched into every reader’s mind, most of Botkin’s examples seem strained and ineffective. *A Sand County Almanac* provided both scientific and ethical inspiration for an entire conservation movement in the twentieth century. I doubt that *The Moon in the Nautilus Shell* will have a similar impact on the environmental movement of the twenty-first century.

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