

## *A Voice for the Water: a philosophical pondering*

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Any crisis of sustainability is established, in part, as a result of rational behavior or irrational behavior. In Garrett Hardin's "The Tragedy of the Commons," the villagers added one more cow to an already overgrazed commons [metaphorically, one might suggest a pasture concept] because the political system of the time offered rewards to do so. It was rational behavior to graze cattle on the commons. It was irrational behavior to add more cattle than what the grounds could sustain. The end result, of course, was a land decimated because of an irresponsible attitude augmented with that apparent lack of common sense.

A lake can proposition a similar opportunity to foster irrational behavior that is able to emanate a kind of brashness of catch at all costs, or a "Who cares if there is a piece of grass on my bumper attitude?" Or it can offer a propensity for sustainable and organized rational behavior because there exists a social consciousness towards a love for the water, and a love of the spirit that embodies the place where the water exists.

We can no longer make assumptions that nature will remain welcoming to a lake environ if it is offered an unknown species that can exist and thrive in a new zone, and allowed to establish a foothold. While one might suspect that all who gaze on a lake, that they hold the same perfect image of nature with owing respect, we know that such a notion is inconsistent with the truth about the fostering of a like rational comportment.

We might parallel this situation and its apparent solution to Hardin's particular kind of shallow ethics known as "lifeboat ethics." The question is, how many people will take it upon themselves to make certain they enter and leave a lake system with a clear conscience about how to treat the lake with due respect, and that means all congruent environs. Can such an attitude be established for all? Can a boat be used as a means to sort through the multitude and tell which ones should be allowed to enter the lake and which ones should be told they are not to trespass further? What effective metaphor will the general public liken to and who are those that simply don't get it?

For those who have an ownership to a specific body of water, they are there for personal reasons. They have come for the aesthetic qualities, the spiritual qualities or the simple memories of

childhood fantasies. Regardless of the respective reason for being there, there is a personal summation that can be explained, but it often is so heartfelt that words don't do it justice.

As for the general public, what standards do they purport for their presence on the water? While for many it can be claimed as good, it is apparent that today, more so than any other period in time, there must be fundamental changes in thinking, policy and culture. All must understand that solutions to issues that surround water are, for the most part, more moral and ethical than technological, and all must embrace the familial sense a lake stirs within our very fiber.

Maybe the following two verses address best the emotional spice that is sensed when regarding Kabekona Lake and its contiguous environs when discussed with its owning populous. Li Po writes, "Since water still flows, though we cut it with swords; And sorrow returns, though we drown it with wine; Since the world can in no way answer to our craving, I will loosen my hair tomorrow and take to a fishing boat." And finally, a Zen verse that may say it best. "If you understand, things are just as they are; If you do not understand, things are just as they are."

The question might be asked, "Are you part of the solution, or part of the problem?"