



*Nature is the first ethical teacher of man.*

-- Peter Kropotkin

*Unless ye believe ye shall not understand.* -- St Augustine

*I was born a thousand years ago, born in the culture of bows and arrows ... born in an age when people loved the things of nature and spoke to it as though it had a soul.* -- Chief Dan George

*The woods were formerly temples of the deities, and even now simple country folk dedicate a tall tree to a God with the ritual of olden times; and we adore sacred groves and the very silence that reigns in them no less devoutly than images that gleam in gold and ivory.* -- Pliny

*In the stillness of the mighty woods, man is made aware of the divine.* -- Richard St Barbe Baker

*There is no better way to please the Buddha than to please all sentient beings.* -- Ladakhi saying

*Ecology and spirituality are fundamentally connected, because deep ecological awareness, ultimately, is spiritual awareness.* -- Fritjof Capra

*Every social transformation ... has rested on a new metaphysical and ideological base; or rather, upon deeper stirrings and intuitions whose rationalised expression takes the form of a new picture of the cosmos and the nature of man.* -- Lewis Mumford

*... there is reason to hope that the ecology-based revivalist movements of the future will seek to achieve their ends in the true Gandhian tradition. It could be that Deep Ecology, with its ethical and metaphysical preoccupations, might well develop into such a movement.* -- Edward Goldsmith

*The main hope for changing humanity's present course may lie ... in the development of a world view drawn partly from ecological principles - in the so-called deep ecology movement. -- Paul Ehrlich*

*The religious behaviour of man contributes to maintaining the sanctity of the world. -- Mircea Eliade*

The Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess coined the phrase **deep ecology** to describe deep ecological awareness. Deep ecology is the foundation of a branch of philosophy known as **ecophilosophy**, Arne Naess prefers the term **ecosophy**, that deals with the ethics of Gaia.

Fritjof Capra defined deep ecology by contrasting it with shallow ecology and showing that it is a network concept:

*Shallow ecology is anthropocentric, or human-centred. It views humans as above or outside of nature, as the source of all value, and ascribes only instrumental, or 'use', value to nature. Deep ecology does not separate humans - or anything else - from the natural environment. It does see the world not as a collection of isolated objects but as a network of phenomena that are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent. Deep ecology recognizes the intrinsic value of all living beings and views human beings as just one particular strand in the web of life.*

Arne Naess formally defined deep ecology as **Ecosophy T** (N - norm, H - hypothesis).

- N1: Self-realization!
- H1: The higher the Self-realization attained by anyone, the broader and deeper the identification with others.
- H2: The higher the level of Self-realization attained by anyone, the more its further increase depends upon the Self-realization of others.
- H3: Complete Self-realization of anyone depends on that of all.
- N2: Self-realization for all living beings!

- H4: Diversity of life increases Self-realization potentials.
- N3: Diversity of life!
- H5: Complexity of life increases Self-realization potentials.
- N4: Complexity!
- H6: Life resources of the Earth are limited.
- H7: Symbiosis maximises Self-realization potentials under conditions of limited resources.
  
- N5: Symbiosis!

Arne Naess was strongly influenced by Baruch Spinoza and Mahatma Gandhi. Self-realisation is in the sense used by Gandhi.

Mahatma Gandhi gave meaning to Self-realisation in various contexts: 'Life is an aspiration, Its mission is to strive after perfection, which is self-realisation'; commenting on the Bhagavad Gita 'Man is not at peace with himself till he has become like unto God. The endeavour to reach this state is the supreme, the only ambition worth having. And this is self-realisation. This self-realisation is the subject of the Gita, as it is of all scriptures ... to be a real devotee is to realise oneself. Self-realisation is not something apart.' As Arne Naess notes for Gandhi "'To realise God," "to realise the Self" and "to realise the Truth" are three expressions of the same development.'

Arne Naess on the influence of Gandhi:

*As a student and admirer since 1930 of Gandhi's non-violent direct actions in bloody conflicts, I am inevitably influenced by his metaphysics which to him personally furnished tremendously powerful motivation and which contributed to keeping him going until his death. His supreme aim was not India's **political** liberation. He led a crusade against extreme poverty, caste suppression, and against terror in the name of religion. The crusade was necessary, but the liberation of the individual human being was his supreme aim. It is strange for many to listen to what he himself said about this ultimate goal:*

*What I want to achieve - what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years - is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha (Liberation). I live and move and have my being in pursuit of that goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end.*

Arne Naess on Spinoza, Self-realisation and the link with Gandhi:

*Does Spinoza think of the sage as a meditative rather than socially and otherwise active person? ...*

*My main argument is ... inspired by ... variety of Mahayana Buddhism ... The teaching that the further along the path to supreme levels of freedom a human being proceeds, the greater the identification and compassion and therefore the greater the effort to help others along the same path. This implies activity of social and political relevance. Gandhi, considering Buddhism to be a reformed Hinduism, furnishes a good example. His mistakes were many, but he tried through meditation of sorts (combined with fasting) to improve the quality of his action, especially the consistency in maintaining a broad and lofty perspective. He deplored the followers in his ashrams who spurned outward action and concentrated on metaphysics, meditation, and fasting. He conceived that as a kind of spiritual egotism. He did not recognise yoga, the meditation and prayer as an **adequate** way to insight, perfection and freedom. Advance towards the highest levels require interaction with the terrifying complexities of social life.*

In a formal study of Spinoza, Naess notes that 'the opposite of the process of self-realization we give ... the name "alienation"'.

Camped out in Death Valley, California, during 1984, George Sessions and Arne Naess draw up eight basic principles that describe deep ecology:

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves. These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realisation of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy *vital* needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life demands such a decrease.

5. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly rapidly worsening.
6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
7. The ideological change is mainly in appreciating *life quality* rather than adhering to to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.
8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary change.

Wilderness, especially deserts, have a special place in communicating spiritual wisdom to man. Moses carried the Ten Commandments down from a mountainside, Buddha received enlightenment whilst meditating under a tree, John the Baptist carried out his baptisms in the River Jordan, Jesus Christ formulated his basic tenets whilst wandering in the desert, Henry David Thoreau camped out for two years in a wooden hut on the north side of Walden Pond, George Sessions and Arne Naess drew up the eight principles of deep ecology whilst camped out in Death Valley.

Without a wilderness to retreat to we will lose a place of contemplation, a place from which we can draw deep spiritual wisdom.

The Sea of Galilee is where Christ walked on water to go to the rescue of stricken disciples. It is a place of peace and solitude, a place of reverence, a place where pilgrims go. There are plans to turn the assumed spot into a major tourist attraction. A bridge will be built just under the surface of the waves so that tourist can be photographed 'walking on water'. Lands End, a wild and windy place at the most western end of Cornwall, had a tourist attraction built, paths manicured, car parks built. Tintagel, allegedly the birth place of King Arthur, was probably once an attractive place, now it has tacky tourist shops selling even tackier gifts, King Arthur's filling station.

Deep ecology is consistent with a network, Gaian, ecological world-view. It arises naturally from the network structure of life, from the Gaian hierarchical order. Its ethics enables man to behave homeotelically towards the Gaian order.

Arne Naess:

*Care flows naturally if the 'self' is widened and deepened so that protection of free Nature is felt and conceived as protection of ourselves ... Just as we need no morals to make us breathe ... [so] if your 'self' in the wide sense embraces another being, you need no moral exhortation to show care ... You care for yourself without feeling any moral pressure to do it ... If reality is like it is experienced by the ecological self, our behaviour **naturally** and beautifully follows norms of strict environmental ethics.*

If we acquire deep ecological awareness we become intuitively aware, ineffable knowledge, tribal wisdom, as Fritjof Capra says 'the connection between an ecological perception of the world and corresponding behaviour is not a logical but a *psychological* connection':

*Logic does not lead us from the fact that we are an integral part of the web of life to certain norms of how we should live. However if we have deep ecological awareness, or experience, of being part of the web of life, then we **will** (as opposed to **should**) be inclined to care for all living nature. Indeed, we can scarcely refrain from responding in this way.*

Wendell Berry:

*People need more than to understand their obligations to one another and to earth; they also need the feelings of such obligations.*

As Arne Naess says 'The essence of deep ecology is to ask deeper questions.' It is only by asking deep questions of today's industrialised, growth-oriented, greedy, materialistic society that we will force a paradigm shift. To concentrate not on simple Cartesian solutions to the causes of pollution, but to probe ever deeper to obtain a holistic view.

In the view of Arne Naess to ask deep questions is to lead to philosophy:

*Persistent why's and how's lead to philosophy ... **Every why- and how- string leads to philosophy.***

Arne Naess used Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" as an example to illustrate deep questioning:

*In the movement instigated largely through the efforts of Rachel Carson and her friends, the 'unecological' policies of industrial nations were sharply criticized. The **foundation** of the criticism was*

**not**

*pollution, waste of resources and disharmony between population and production rate in non-industrialized nations. The foundation rested on answers to deeper questions of 'why?' and 'how?'. Consequently the recommended policies also touched fundamentals such as man's attitude towards nature, industrial man's attitude towards non-industrial cultures, and the ecological aspects of widely different economic systems.*

Medieval historian Lynn White illustrates the failure of the shallow approach to ecological problems and the need for a deep ethical dimension:

*I have not discovered anyone who publicly advocates pollution. Everybody says that he is against it. Yet the crisis deepens because all specific measures to remedy it are either undercut by 'legitimate' interest groups, or demands kinds of regional cooperation for which our political system does not provide. We deserve our increasing pollution because, according to our structure of values, so many other things have priority over achieving a viable ecology. ... our structure of values ... is deep rooted in us ... Until it is eradicated not only from our minds but also from our emotions, we shall doubtless be unable to make fundamental changes in our attitudes and actions affecting ecology.*

To probe deeper is to strip away the outer reality. It has close parallels with subatomic physics and the inner world of deep meditation. As with Buddhism, the inner reality is to achieve oneness with all reality.

Not surprisingly the early proponents of deep ecology and what may be loosely grouped as the 'Deep Ecology School' are nearly all either environmentalists, philosophers, poets, or Buddhists: Arne Naess (mountaineer, philosopher, sociologist and environmental activist), George Sessions (philosopher), Bill Devall (sociologist, philosopher, environmental activist and practitioner of aikido), Alan Drengson (philosopher and practitioner of aikido), Michael Zimmerman (Buddhist leanings), Dolores LaChapelle (mountaineer, teacher of T'ai Chi), Robert

Aitken (poet and Zen Buddhist), Gary Snyder (mountaineer, poet and Zen Buddhist), Michael Soule (conservationist, biologist and Buddhist), John Seed (ecological activist with Buddhist leanings), Joanna Macy (environmental and social activist, Buddhist), Jeremy Haywood (Buddhist), Paul Ehrlich (ecologist), Fritjof Capra (polymath and practitioner of T'ai Chi), Edward Goldsmith (polymath and ecophilosopher).

Arne Naess, born 1912, is Norway's leading philosopher. No ivory tower academic, Arne Naess is more than happy to put his principles into action by joining an environmental demonstration.

Erik Dammann:

*As we have seen, a number of academics in several countries have already given up their elite positions in order to make their knowledge available to [grassroots] movements and to use their analytical faculties in investigating the possibilities for action on the movements' premises. A Norwegian example is the philosopher Arne Naess who gave up his professorship and emerged from academic isolation in order to be freer to participate in the multitude of popular campaigns for ecology and social change. His fearless action has added weight to these campaigns, and the well-known picture of the internationally renowned professor calmly being carried away by the police from the protest camp at Mardola has certainly given many good citizens a new understanding that activists are not only 'hysterical extremists'. His books, especially *Ecology, Society and Life-style*, have without doubt strengthened many of the more intellectually oriented campaigners in their understanding of such things as the importance of a holistic approach and of value priorities.*

The Alta Confrontation, that took place in northern Norway, 14 January 1981, was the largest protest ever seen in Norway, when large numbers of Lapps, joined by lawyers, academics, chained themselves together to protest at the construction of large-scale dam and power generation project. 600 police confronted more than 1,000 demonstrators. Arne Naess was one of the protesters who had to be cut free.

During WWII Arne Naess was an active participant in the nonviolent resistance to Nazi occupation. In the post-war years he was involved in the peace movement, then later in the ecology movement. Arne Naess resigned his chair of philosophy at the University of Oslo in 1969 to enable him to take a more activist role, or as he put it because he 'wanted to live rather than function'. Arne Naess's ecophilosophical work dates from the resignation of his professorship in 1969.

George Sessions and Bill Devall were the first to recognise the value of the work of Arne Naess, and it was their heavy promotion that brought Naess to international attention.

Sessions writing of Devall gives an idea of the ecological commitment:

*Bill put his deep ecology commitment into practice. He practices 'living in place' with a very low-entropy, low consumption life style. For the last ten years, Bill has worked relentlessly with environmental organisations and individually to save the Siskiyou redwoods, Humboldt Bay and seacoast, and the entire North Coast area from further degradation from US Forest Service, the timbering companies, developers, and others. He was largely instrumental in setting up the Northcoast Environmental Centre, a coalition of environmental groups (Sierra Club, Audubon, Friends of the Earth, Friends of the River, etc.) and a model of its kind. Bill is a frequent contributor to Econews (Newsletter of the Northeast Environmental Center).*

Deep ecology had deep roots before Arne Naess gave the philosophy coherence by coining the phrase and providing a formal framework.

George Sessions:

*The philosophical roots of the Deep Ecology movement are found in the ecocentrism and social criticisms of Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, D H Lawrence, Robinson Jeffers and Aldous Huxley. Influential ecological/social criticism has been derived also from the writings of George Orwell and Theodore Roszak, and from the critiques of the problems created by the rise of civilizations written by the maverick historian Lewis Mumford. Further inspiration for contemporary ecological consciousness and the Deep Ecology movement can be traced to ecocentric religions and the ways of life of primal peoples around the world, and to Taoism, Saint Francis of Assisi, the Romantic Nature-oriented counterculture of the nineteenth century with its roots in Spinoza, and the Zen Buddhism of Alan Watts and Gary Snyder.*

Lynn White, who was highly critical of Christianity's role in today's ecological crisis 'Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt', saw the solution lay beyond the technological dimension and involved addressing the spiritual or ethical dimension, the position vis-a-vis man versus nature

and his right to exploit:

*What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one ... We shall continue to have a worsening ecological crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence other than to serve man ... Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must be essentially religious whether we call it that or not.*

More recently Christian Theologians and Biblical scholars, Father Robert Murray, Margaret Barker, Vincent Rossi, have begun to question the traditional Biblical interpretation that Man was granted dominion over all God's creatures, ie granted the absolute right to exploit, and that instead there was a Cosmic Covenant and that Man's role was to help maintain the cosmic order for all of God's Creation. An interpretation that would have been recognisable to St Ephrem the Syrian, St Dionysius the Areopagite, St Maximus the Confessor, Hildegard von Bingen and forms the world-view of vernacular man and chthonic societies. Organisations like ARC and REEP are attempting to reconnect mainstream religions with their environment.

Isaiah 24:4-6:

The earth mourns and withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left.

In vernacular societies, spirituality and awareness of the natural world is part of everyday existence.

The mountainous region of Ladakh has a Tibetan culture. Helena Norberg-Hodge, who has spent some time living in Ladakh, describes the planting of seed at the start of the season, before the seed is planted an astrologer is consulted to pick the right day and the person with the right sign to sow the first seed:

*Next, the spirits of the earth and water - the sadak and the lhu - must be pacified: the worms of the soil, the fish of the streams, the soul of the land. They can easily be angered; the turning of*

*a spade, the breaking of stones, even walking on the ground above them can upset their peace. Before sowing, a feast is prepared in their honour. For an entire day a group of monks recite prayers; no one eats meat or drinks chang (the local barley brew). In a cluster of trees at the edge of the village, where a small mound of clay bricks has been built for the spirits, milk is offered. As the sun sets, other offerings are thrown into the stream.*

*[next day] ... As the sun appears, the whole family gathers. Two men carry the wooden plough; ahead a pair of massive dzo dwarf the children who lead them. Work and festivity are one. People drink chang from silver-lined cups, and the air hums with the sounds of celebration. A monk in robes of deep maroon chants a sacred text; laughter and song drift back and forth from field to field. The ravages of winter are over.*

Before technology and Big Business took over and Western farming degenerated into little more than strip mining of agriculture land, Western farmers had the same empathy with their land. The soil and all that grew in it were treated with reverence, the farmers' role was to improve the land through his understanding of the natural world, to work with Nature not against, the harvest was a time for enjoyment and merriment; now the soil, the plants, the animals, the landscape, those who toil on the land, are assets to be used and abused as the market dictates.

The emergence of deep ecology and its coincidence with the emergence of radical movements of the 1960s, and the way it has given these movements a spiritual/ethical dimension, and added to their radicalisation, is a pointer to the future direction.

George Sessions:

*The long-range Deep Ecology movement emerged more or less spontaneously and informally as a philosophical and scientific social/political movement during the so-called Ecological Revolution of the 1960s. Its main concern has been to bring about a major paradigm shift - a shift in perception, values, and lifestyles - as a basis for redirecting the ecologically destructive path of modern industrial growth societies. Since the 1960s, the long-range Deep Ecology movement has been characterised philosophically by a move from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism, and by environmental activism.*

Paul Ehrlich sees deep ecology as the way forward:

*The main hope for changing humanity's present course may lie ... in the development of a world view drawn partly from ecological principles - in the so-called deep ecology movement. The term 'deep ecology' was coined in 1972 by Arne Naess of the University of Oslo to contrast with the fight against pollution and resource depletion in developed countries, which he called 'shallow ecology'. The deep ecology movement thinks today's human thought patterns and social organization are inadequate to deal with the population-resource-environmental crisis - a view with which I tend to agree. Within the movement disagreement abounds, but most of its adherents favour a much less anthropocentric, more egalitarian world, with greater emphasis on empathy and less on scientific rationality.*

*I am convinced that such a quasi-religious movement, one concerned with the need to change the values that now govern much of human activity, is essential to the persistence of our civilization.*

Fritjof Capra also sees deep ecology as the way forward:

*The new vision of reality is an ecological vision in a sense which goes far beyond the immediate concerns with environmental protection. To emphasise this deeper meaning of ecology, philosophers and scientists have begun to make a distinction between 'deep ecology' and 'shallow environmentalism'. Whereas shallow environmentalism is concerned with more efficient control and management of the natural environment for the benefit of 'man', the deep ecology movement recognizes that ecological balance will require profound changes in our perception of the role of human beings in the planetary ecosystem. In short, it will require a new philosophical and religious basis.*

*Deep ecology is supported by modern science, and in particular by the new systems approach, but it is rooted in a perception of reality that goes beyond the scientific framework to an intuitive awareness of the oneness of all life, the interdependence of its multiple manifestations and its cycles of change and transformation. When the concept of the human spirit is understood in this sense, as the mode of consciousness in which the individual feels connected to the cosmos as a whole, it becomes clear that ecological awareness is truly spiritual. Indeed, the idea of the individual being linked to the cosmos is expressed in the Latin root of the word religion, religare ('to bind strongly'), as well as the Sanskrit yoga, which means union.*

The one movement that has adopted Deep Ecology in its entirety is Earth First! Spawned out of a disillusionment with traditional ecological campaigns, they recognised the value of nature for its own intrinsic self, the need to value all communities, including human communities, the need for biodiversity. They have successfully adopted the tactics of the civil rights and peace movements and use direct action to further their aims. Their structure lacks structure, small, self-contained, semi-autonomous units, with loose network structures forming the whole. Capital and Big Business, being by their very nature anti-Nature, are seen as the ultimate enemy. Earth First! are the Jesuits of Deep Ecology.

Dave Foreman, co-founder of Earth First!:

*Earth First! has led the effort to reframe the question of wilderness preservation from an aesthetic and utilitarian one to an ecological one, from a focus on scenery and recreation to a focus on biological diversity.*

*Similarly, we have gone beyond the agenda of mainstream conservation groups to protect a **portion** of the remaining wilderness by calling for the reintroduction of extirpated species and the restoration of vast wilderness tracts. We have brought the discussion of biocentric philosophy - Deep Ecology - out of dusty academic journals. We have effectively introduced nonviolent civil disobedience into the repertoire of wildlife preservation activism. We have also helped to jolt the conservation movement out of its middle-age lethargy, and re-inspire it with passion, joy, and humor. In doing all of this, Earth First! has restructured the conservation spectrum and redefined the parameters of debate on ecological matters.*

Warwick Fox has attempted to address what he sees as fundamental flaws in deep ecology and extend it by what he calls transpersonal ecology (trans in this context meaning transcend).

For growing numbers of converts, deep ecology is the religion of the new millennium, the new ethics, the new morality, a return to the chthonic world-view of vernacular man, part of the paradigm shift to a new ecological world-view.

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