

### Ecological and Psychological Study

#### Deep Ecology is defined as:

- a philosophy based on our sacred relationship with Earth and all beings
- an international movement for a viable future
- a path for self realisation
- a compass for daily action

#### Deep Ecology Supports:

- continuing inquiry into the appropriate human roles on our planet
- root cause analysis of unsustainable practices
- reduction of human consumption
- conservation and restoration of ecosystems
- a life of committed action for Earth

#### Arne Naess's original definition of ecosophy is:

"By an ecosophy I mean a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium. A philosophy as a kind of sofia (or) wisdom, is openly normative, it contains both norms, rules, postulates, value priority announcements and hypotheses concerning the state of affairs in our universe. Wisdom is policy wisdom, prescription, not only scientific description and prediction. The details of an ecosophy will show many variations due to significant differences concerning not only the 'facts' of pollution, resources, population, etc. but also value priorities."

The word "ecology" originates from the science of biology, where it is used to refer to the ways in which living things interact with each other and with their surroundings. For Arne Naess, ecological science, concerned with facts and logic alone, cannot answer ethical questions about

how we should live. For this we need ecological wisdom. Deep ecology seeks to develop this by focussing on deep experience, deep questioning and deep commitment. These constitute an interconnected system. Each gives rise to and supports the other, whilst the entire system is, what Naess would call, an ecosophy: an evolving but consistent philosophy of being, thinking and acting in the world, that embodies ecological wisdom and harmony. [10]

The word "deep" in part referred to the level of questioning of our purposes and values, when arguing in environmental conflicts. The "deep" movement involves deep questioning, right down to fundamentals. The shallow stops before the ultimate level. We move toward a total view via deep questioning—always asking why—to ultimate norms and premises, and via articulation (or application) to policies and practices. The shallow ecology movement Naess characterised in 1973 as the "Fight against pollution and resource depletion. Central objective: the health and affluence of people in the developed countries"

### **Arne Naess specified 4 levels of Questioning and Articulation or Views:**

Level I Ultimate Premises eg Taoism, Christianity, Ecosophy T, etc.

Level II Platform Principles eg Eco-feminist Movement, Deep Ecology Movement, etc.

Level III Specific Policies.

Level IV Practical Actions.

Ecosophy T is Arne Naess's own ultimate ecocentric philosophy, from which he can logically support the platform principles of the deep ecology movement.

### **The Platform Principles of the Deep Ecology Movement**

The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman Life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.

Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realizations of these values & are also values in themselves.

Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital human needs.

The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease.

Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.

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.

The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.

Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation to directly or indirectly try to implement the necessary changes.

Another person starting from their own ultimate premise would use the same logical techniques to define their own platform, and vice versa. This a good method of highlighting weaknesses, inconsistencies and assumptions in a personal belief system, or to go deeper and not accept or present "shallow" arguments.

## Deep Experience

DEEP EXPERIENCE, or it might be termed a moment of enlightenment, is often what gets a person started along a deep ecological path.

Stephan Harding [10] cites Aldo Leopold, from his book *A Sand County Almanac*, as an example of this. For Leopold, the experience was of sufficient intensity to trigger a total reorientation in his life's work as a wildlife manager and ecologist. In the 1920s he had been appointed by the US government to develop a rational, scientific policy for eradicating the wolf from the entire United States. The justification for this intervention was that wolves competed with sport hunters for deer, so that fewer wolves would mean more deer for the hunters.

As a wildlife manager of those times, Leopold adhered to the unquestioning belief that humans were superior to the rest of nature, and were thus morally justified in manipulating it as much as was required in order to maximise human welfare.

One morning, Leopold was out with some friends on a walk in the mountains. Being hunters, they carried their rifles with them, in case they got a chance to kill some wolves. It got around to lunchtime, and they sat down on a cliff overlooking a turbulent river. Soon they saw what appeared to be some deer fording the torrent, but they soon realised that it was a pack of wolves. They took up their rifles and began to shoot excitedly into the pack, but with little accuracy. Eventually an old wolf was down by the side of the river, and Leopold rushed down to gloat at her death. What met him was a fierce green fire dying in the wolf's eyes. He writes in a chapter entitled *Thinking like a Mountain* that: "there was something new to me in those eyes, something known only to her and to the mountain. I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunter's paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view."

"Thinking like a mountain" has become a key phrase in the deep ecology movement, as evidenced by the book *Thinking like a mountain – towards a council of all beings* [2].

Also for Arne Naess a key influence has been his deep relationship to Hallingskarvet mountain in central Norway, where, in 1937, he built a simple cabin at the place called Tvergastein (crossed stones). It is in this place: high up, totally isolated, with commanding views of landscape down below, with Arctic storms threatening to blow away his roof, that most of his important work in deep ecology has been done. In this inhospitable retreat, under snow and ice for most of the year, where only lichen and tiny alpine flowers grow, Arne Naess has spent a total of more than ten years, watching, climbing, thinking, writing, and adoring the mountain. [10]

Currently in the USA logging companies are trying to stop some of the action of deep ecologists by claiming that it is a religion. "...Insofar as these deep feelings are religious, deep ecology has a religious component, and those people who have done the most to make societies aware of the destructive way in which we live in relation to natural settings have had such religious feelings."(Devall & Sessions, 1985) [15]

### **Despairwork**

"Until now, every generation throughout history lived with the tacit certainty that other generations would follow." The loss of that certainty "is the pivotal psychological reality of our time." Which results in anger, rage, guilt and sorrow beyond historical personal concern to the suffering of all life and the planet itself. This is what Joanna Macy [18] identified as our response to the threat of global nuclear war in the 1960s.

As parts of a larger body we feel, at a semi-conscious level, acute pain. Pain serves as a warning signal, but we block it out because it hurts, is frightening and we do not understand it. Apathy means the refusal to experience pain, this is reflected in disbelief and denial and a double life, upbeat on the surface, but unacknowledged awareness of unnamed dangers below.

### **Macy gives the following reasons for our apathy:**

1. Fear of appearing Stupid
2. Fear of Guilt (from being a part of society causing the problem)
3. Fear of Causing Distress (burdening others with our worries)
4. Fear of Provoking Disaster (superstition of naming the devil or self-fulfilling thoughts)
5. Fear of Appearing Unpatriotic
6. Fear of Sowing Panic
7. Fear of Religious Doubt (trust God, he won't let this happen)
8. Fear of appearing Too Emotional, self-indulgent, idealistic...
9. Sense of Separate Existence (all our drives are ego-centred)
10. Fear of feeling Powerless (not being in control, "nothing I can do about it")

Some of the effects of this repression are: alienation, displacement activities, like consumerism,

destructive behaviour, political passivity, blocking out painful information, burnout and a sense of powerlessness.

**To counter this Joanna Macy developed "Despairwork". This has five fundamental principles:**

1. Feelings of pain for our world are natural and healthy.
2. This pain is morbid only if denied
3. Information alone is not enough (we know we are in danger, can we free ourselves to respond?)
4. Unblocking repressed feelings releases energy and clears the mind
5. Unblocking our pain for the world reconnects us with the larger web of life

Despairwork is a key part of Deep Ecology workshops, known as Despair and Empowerment. It is comparable to a rite of passage. Despairwork is not a solo venture it is undertaken in the context of community [19]

Alan Watts said, "You didn't come into this world. You came out of it, like a wave from the ocean. You are not a stranger here."

If we see ourselves as part of the world, it becomes possible to see that such uncomfortable feelings may serve a valuable function. Just as it hurts when we put our finger over a flame, 'pain for the world' alerts us to the injuries of our world and can move us to respond. Allowing ourselves to feel for our world also opens us to a source of energy and aliveness, and a strength that comes from connection to something more than just our narrow selves.

Deep Ecology workshops bring people together with the intention to heal our relationship with the earth. They provide an opportunity to explore our emotional responses to world problems and may offer 'despair and empowerment' methods to use the energy of these emotional responses in our work for earth recovery. The workshops introduce the Deep Ecology approach, working with ideas, feelings, spirituality and personal action planning.

Workshops often end with a process of 'action planning' that begins with the question [1] "If I

was in touch with my full strength, and it was as though the larger self-organising whole of life on earth were acting through me, what goal, challenge or project excites me to put my energies into it?"

The Council of All Beings is a ritual, or community therapy or experiential process by which to appreciate the perspective and values of deep ecology, and develop an ecological sense of self.

It is intended to help us humans to move beyond an anthropocentric and exploitative mindset.

There are two forms: a ritual of 2-3 hours where people gather to speak on behalf of other species; or a series of exercises, often connected with despair and empowerment workshops, culminating in the ritual.

### **Eco-centric**

The first Principle of the Deep Ecology Movement "The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman Life on Earth have value in themselves" is expanded by Naess [12]:

"Rejection of the man-in-environment image in favor of the relational, oral-field image. Organisms as knots in the biospherical net or field of intrinsic relations. An intrinsic relation between two things A and B is such that the relation belongs to the definitions or basic constitutions of A and B. so that without the relation, A and B are no longer the same things. The total-field model dissolves not only the man-in-environment concept, but every compact thing in-milieu concept except when talking at a superficial or preliminary level of communication"

Human culture and philosophy, especially in the currently dominant Western tradition, has focused on human values and eschewed the natural world.

A distinctive aspect of the deep ecology movement is its recognition of the inherent value of all

other living beings, and of the inherent worth of diversity of all kinds. This awareness is used to shape environmental policies and actions. Those who work for social changes based on this recognition are motivated by love of Nature as well as for humans. They try to be caring in all their dealings. They recognise that we cannot go on with industrial culture's business as usual. We must make fundamental changes in basic values and practices or we will destroy the diversity and beauty of the world, and its ability to support diverse human cultures.

The Deep Ecology movement is not misanthropic, see first principle, although some people have written about it as such; nor does being affected more by the suffering of family or other humans than other creatures mean that a person cannot be a supporter of the movement.

Ralph Metzner [4] points to two meanings of Anthropocentric. One is the literal meaning "human centred" which it has been pointed out, that as humans, can be our only perspective on the world. Metzner says the deep ecologists' critique of anthropocentrism has an implicit meaning of assumed superiority and right to dominate others, this can also be referred to as human chauvinism or speciesism.

### **Eco-feminism and Social Ecology**

In an interview Michael E. Zimmerman, Professor of Philosophy at Tulane University, New Orleans [11] said about eco-feminism:

"There are many ecofeminists - people like Joanna Macy for example - who would call themselves deep ecologists, but there are some ecofeminists who've made an important claim against it. They say the real problem isn't anthropocentrism but androcentrism - man-centeredness. They say that 10,000 years of patriarchy is ultimately responsible for the destruction of the biosphere and the development of authoritarian practices, both socially and environmentally."

"Deep ecologists concede that patriarchy has been responsible for a lot of violence against women and nature. But while they oppose the oppression of women and promote egalitarian social relations, deep ecologists also warn that getting rid of patriarchy would not necessarily cure the problem, because you can imagine a society with fairly egalitarian social relationships where nature is still used instrumentally."

There are other social ecologists who see that the problem of the environmental crisis is directly linked to authoritarianism and hierarchy. This includes issues like racism, sexism, third world exploitation, mistreatment of other marginalised groups etc, as well as nature.

Naess commented on this issue [12] "Ecologically responsible policies are concerned only in part with pollution and resource depletion. There are deeper concerns which touch upon principles of diversity, complexity, autonomy, decentralization, symbiosis, egalitarianism, and classlessness."

Deep ecology, perhaps by trying to avoid anthropocentrism, puts Nature, or Gaia, before human society, but that is not to deny the value of humans and their culture, and the need to change current behaviour. Naess said [12] "Diversity of human ways of life is in part due to (intended or unintended) exploitation and suppression on the part of certain groups. The exploiter lives differently from the exploited, but both are adversely affected in their potentialities of self-realization. The principle of diversity does not cover differences due merely to certain attitudes or behaviors forcibly blocked or restrained. The principles of ecological egalitarianism and of symbiosis support the same anticlass posture. The ecological attitude favors the extension of all three principles to any group conflicts; including those of today between developing and developed nations. The three principles also favor extreme caution toward any overall plans for the future, except those consistent with wide and widening classless diversity."

The 4th principle of the Deep Ecology Movement is "The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease." Naess explained this [12] as: "Ecological egalitarianism implies the reinterpretation of the future-research variable, "level of crowding," so that general mammalian crowding and loss of life-equality is taken seriously, not only human crowding. (Research on the high requirements of free space of certain mammals has, incidentally, suggested that theorists of human urbanism have largely underestimated human life-space requirements. Behavioral crowding symptoms [neuroses, aggressiveness, loss of traditions] are largely the same among mammals.)"

This has been seen by eco-feminists as "a grab at women's special potency" [13]

Perhaps the key difference is a social agenda or a spiritual one. Ariel Kay Salleh seems to

dismiss spirituality [13] as evidenced by "women already flow with the system of nature" and "Sadly, ... deep ecology is simply another self-congratulatory reformist move; .. Even the Eastern spiritual traditions, whose authority deep ecology so often has recourse to-since these dissolve the repressive hierarchy of Man/Nature/God- even these philosophies pay no attention to the inherent Man/Woman hierarchy contained within this metaphysic of the Whole" and "the deep ecology movement is very much a spiritual search for people in a barren secular age" which she concludes is really caused by men's search to re-discover and love the woman inside themselves.

The tone of this article seems to me to be trying to provoke a response, particularly an aggressive one from men. My simple response is that men are also part of nature with their own role to play, and if even a quick reading of Taoism fails to see how it addresses male and female, then, the reader must be starting from a very biased viewpoint.

" *The beginning of the universe*[14] Tao Te Ching verse 52

Is the mother of all things.

Knowing the mother, one also knows the sons.

Knowing the sons, yet remaining in touch with the mother,

Brings freedom from the fear of death."

There should not be a problem or difference between these various "eco" movements. That there is a conflict seems indicative of the current stresses on society and individuals. There seems a need for "I'm right, your wrong" type of statement, and for people who perhaps feel that they haven't any power to be listened to and to get a reaction that justifies themselves.

Alfred Alder, referred to by Metzner [4], believed that conscious feelings of superiority are

always a compensation for an unconscious inferiority complex and that such inferiority feelings tend to arise normally in childhood, as a result of prolonged dependency and immaturity. Metzner [4], goes on to quote Paul Shepard essay "a Post-historic primitivism" "incomplete, ontogeny runs into the dead end of immaturity and a miasma of pathological limbos." (Ontogenesis = origin & development of an individual) as I interpret this it is psychological speak for incomplete personal development leads to immaturity. The interesting part is what causes this immaturity, and the resulting behaviour of the current dominant western culture. Shepard proposes, I think if I understand his language, that it is the disconnection from the hunter-gatherer life and hence from Nature, This disconnection is particularly critical at adolescence, and this is where the global culture becomes a "laddish" culture, as noticed by Helena Norberg-Hodge in Learning from Ladakh.

### Systems Theory

Deep Ecology "starts" from an ultimate philosophical view, but this is then to motivate work and made experiential, immediate and practical by using scientific insights from the ecological and systems view of the world. (Note there is no one starting point in Deep ecology, all the levels influence each other and evolve together.)

Systems Theory sees our world in terms of 'systems', where each system is a 'whole' that is more than the sum of its parts, but also itself a 'part' of larger systems. For example, a cell is more than just a pile of molecules and itself is a part of larger systems eg. an organ. An organ is on one level a whole in itself, but on another, it is a part of a system at the level of an individual person. A family and a community can both be seen as 'systems' where the 'parts' are people.

There is a saying that you may think that if you understand "one" you understand "two", because one and one is two; but you can not understand "two" if you fail to understand "and".

Drawing from the General Systems theory of Ludwig von Bertalanffy and the exploratory self-organisation of open systems by Erving Laszlo, Joanna Macy [18] concludes that hierarchy tends to be dysfunctional to the system because it inhibits diversity and feedback; it obstructs self-organising life processes and fosters entropy – or systemic disintegration. It reduces flexibility and responsiveness.

We are open self-organising systems; our breathing, acting, and thinking arise in interaction with our shared world via the currents of matter, energy, and information that flow through us. Where then is our personal boundary, our distinctive self?

Chris Johnstone [1] explains deep ecology is not about absence of self, but about finding our roots in wider and deeper levels of self. He quotes John Burnham's textbook "Family Therapy", 1986, "Health lies in having clear yet permeable boundaries. This allows for distance to be established without losing contact, and for contact to be maintained without losing individuality."

The boundary of self is a semi-permeable membrane, so that self is both part and whole, open to flow yet retaining autonomy.

The empowerment of deep ecology is seen [1] as a logical development from the systems approach, with its rigorous scientific base, while at the same time being fully consistent with a mystical or spiritual view of life.

Perhaps the most influential and encompassing systems theory is the Gaia theory, see the following section.

Other theories or metaphors that may be similarly of use to deep ecology are, from an article by Alan Wittbecker in *The Trumpeter* [17]:

1) a process view (A. N. Whitehead 1920s) in which organisms are dynamic structures that are immanent and simultaneous with the process, rather than consequences of natural selection of past random mutations;

2) a field concept (C. H. Waddington 1960s) for development, emphasizing dynamic transformation (form as organized spatio-temporal domain), in contrast with the particulate concept of an organism, understood in terms of group dynamics, rather than selective advantage or cost/benefit;

3) self-organization (Francesco Varela 1970s) or autopoiesis, which refers to the dynamic self-producing and self-maintaining activities of living beings that incorporate materials through physiological processes;

and 4) reciprocally constrained construction (R. D. Gray 1980s), according to which the organism and environment are co-implicative, co-defining, and co-constructing in a process of self-assembly, where the self is the organism/environment system.

### **Gaia Hypothesis**

The Gaia Hypothesis takes the idea of systems further and applies it to the whole planet. All of life on earth can be seen as whole that is more than the sum of its parts, this whole being like a

huge super-lifeform that we call 'Gaia' (after the name for the ancient Greek goddess of the earth). Living systems have a tendency to keep themselves in balance but also to adapt and evolve over time. Scientists have found that the earth also has these tendencies, with feedback mechanisms to 'keep in balance' the temperature and oxygen levels of the atmosphere, just as our bodies maintain the temperature and oxygen levels in our arteries.

The Gaia Hypothesis is stating that the earth is alive and that we are part of it.

The Gaia hypothesis proposed by James Lovelock considers the Earth as a planet sized entity with properties that could not be predicted from the sum of its parts.

The reasons for this as stated in [6] are:

"Life first appeared on Earth about 3,500 million years ago. From that time until now, the presence of fossils shows that the earth's climate has changed very little. Yet the output of heat from the Sun, the surface properties of the Earth, and the composition of the atmosphere have almost certainly varied greatly over the same period.

The chemical composition of the atmosphere bears no relation to the expectations of steady-state chemical equilibrium. The presence of methane, nitrous oxide, and even nitrogen in our present oxidising atmosphere represents violation of the rules of chemistry to be measured in tens of orders of magnitude. Disequilibria on this scale suggest that the atmosphere is not merely a biological product, but more probably a biological construction: not living, but like a cat's fur, a bird's feathers, or the paper of a wasp's nest, an extension of a living system designed to maintain a chosen environment. Thus the atmospheric concentration of gases such as oxygen and ammonia is found to be kept at an optimum value from which even small departures could have disastrous consequences for life.

The climate and chemical properties of the Earth now and throughout its history seem always to have been optimal for life..."

The use of an identity, especially a female one, appeals to a wider audience who can add anthropomorphic attributes in much the same way a sailor might do to his or her ship. In this way it can help individuals to come into a relationship with the planet and to foster the poetry and emotion that can enthuse people to care about the issues that the "dry" scientific facts are presenting for our consideration.

To quote from James Lovelock[6] "It is an alternative to a pessimistic view that sees nature as a force to be subdued and conquered. It is also an alternative to that equally depressing picture of our planet as a demented spaceship, forever travelling, driverless and purposeless, around an inner circle of the sun."

**James Lovelock says in [7] "Gaia theory provokes a view of the Earth where**

Life is a planetary-scale phenomenon. On this scale it is near immortal and has no need to reproduce.

There can be no partial occupation of a planet by living organisms. It would be as impermanent as half an animal. The presence of sufficient living organisms on a planet is needed for the

regulation of the environment...

...Gaia draws attention to the fallibility of the concept of adaptation. It is no longer sufficient to say that "organisms better adapted than others are more likely to leave offspring." It is necessary to add that the growth of an organism affects its physical and chemical environment; the evolution of the species and the evolution of the rocks, therefore, are tightly coupled as a single, indivisible process.

Theoretical ecology is enlarged. By tacking the species and their physical environment together as a single system, we can ..., build ecological models that are mathematically stable and yet include large numbers of competing species..."

### Summary

Deep ecology provides a framework for connecting our ultimate values with our relationship to our environment and community. This methodology of this framework can be applied to add structure to any sustainable or environmental movement.

Gaia and systems theory show that we are not separate from our environment and that nature has an implicit value independent of humanity.

Deep ecology is supported by 30years wealth of experience and techniques for enabling individuals to access their own resources to build a relationship that is meaningful for them, and empowers them to live in a sustainable way.

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