

Ecophilosophy, Ecosophy and the Deep Ecology Movement: An Overview

By [Alan Drengson](#) ©1999

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During the last thirty years philosophers in the West have critiqued the underlying assumptions of Modern philosophy in relation to the natural world. This development has been part of an ongoing expansion of philosophical work involving cross cultural studies of world views or ultimate philosophies. Since philosophical studies in the West have often ignored the natural world, and since most studies in ethics have focused on human values, those approaches which emphasize ecocentric values have been referred to as ecophilosophy. Just as the aim of traditional philosophy is sophia or wisdom, so the aim of ecophilosophy is ecosophy or ecological wisdom. The Practice of ecophilosophy is an ongoing, comprehensive, deep inquiry into values, the nature of the world and the self.

The mission of ecophilosophy is to explore a diversity of perspectives on human-Nature contexts and interrelationships. It fosters deeper and more harmonious relationships between place, self, community and the natural world. This aim is furthered by comparing the diversity of ecosophies from which people support the platform principles of the global, long range, deep ecology movement.

Here is Arne Naess's original definition of ecosophy: "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." (See A. Drengson and Y. Inoue, 1995, page 8.)

In 1973 (Inquiry 16, pp. 95-100) the name "deep ecology movement" was introduced into environmental literature by Norwegian philosopher and mountaineer Professor Arne Naess. (For a reprint of the article see Drengson and Inoue 1995.) Environmentalism emerged as a popular grass roots political movement in the 1960's with the publication of Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring*. Those already involved in conservation/preservation efforts were joined by many others concerned about the detrimental environmental impacts of modern industrial technology. The longer range, older elements of the movement included writers and activists like Thoreau and Muir, whereas the newer mainstream awareness was closer to the wise conservation philosophy of people like Gifford Pinchot.

Naess's article was based on a talk he gave in Bucharest in 1972 at the Third World Future Research Conference. In his talk Naess discussed the longer-range background of the ecology movement and its connection with respect for Nature and the inherent worth of other beings. As a mountaineer who had climbed all over the world, Naess enjoyed the opportunity to observe political and social action in diverse cultures. Both historically and in the contemporary movement Naess saw two different forms of environmentalism, not necessarily incompatible with one another. One he called the "long-range deep ecology movement" and the other, the "shallow ecology movement." 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.

In his ecophilosophy framework for cross cultural analysis of grass roots social-political movements, Naess distinguishes between four levels of discourse (see the chart below). In forming cross cultural global movements some general consensus develops that focuses the movement through platform principles (as is the case for many movements--literary, philosophical, social, political, etc.), such as the principles of social justice, or the principles of peace and nonviolence, or the principles for the deep ecology movement (DEM). Movements so described have their principles emerge from the bottom up and are thus called grass roots movements (as in the Gandhian tradition), not top down power over hierarchies .

The aim of ecophilosophy is a total or comprehensive view of our human and individual situation. Comprehensive includes the whole global context with us in it, sharing a world with diverse cultures and beings. 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. Much cross cultural work is done at the level of platform principles, and we can have a high level of agreement at this level that Naess calls Level II. From Level II we can engage in deep questioning and pursue articulating our own ecosophy, which might be grounded in some major worldview or religion, such as Pantheism or Christianity. This level of ultimate philosophies is called Level I. There is considerable diversity at this level. From Level II principles we can develop specific policy recommendations and formulations, or Level III. From Level III application leads us to practical actions, Level IV. There is considerable diversity at the level of policies, but even more at the level of practical actions.

Table Showing Levels of Questioning and Articulation

Level I	Ultimate Premises	Taoism, Christianity, Ecosophy T, etc.
Level II	Platform Principles Movement	Peace Movement, Deep Ecology Movement, Social Justice Movement, etc.
Level III	Policies	A, B, C, etc.
Level IV	Practical Actions	W, X, Y, etc.

[The above chart is a simplification of Naess's Apron Diagram. See Drengson and Inoue, 1995, pp. 10-12.]

In deep questioning we move toward ultimate premises and norms. In the process of derivation and application we move toward platform support and developing policies and practical actions. This is a continuous back and forth process which keeps our understanding and practices in harmony with a changing world. The deep approach, then, becomes evolutionary, changing with natural conditions. (For example, the "new corporation" [or community] has to engage in this back and forth movement

and so requires full employee participation, diverse leaders and initiative takers.) In the three grassroots movements mentioned above the principles are individual and international. It is important to note that there is great diversity at the level of ultimate philosophies. We do not all have to subscribe to the same ultimate ecological philosophy in order to work cooperatively for the benefit of the planet and its communities of beings. The front is very long and we each have values to contribute to realizing higher qualities in life as a whole. We must work on many different levels.

Naess has much first-hand experience in the world peace and social justice movements, and he is a committed practitioner of the way of nonviolence taught by Gandhi (Naess 1974). He also is a philosopher of science and logic who has done innovative work on language and communication. His studies and travels have given him deep cross-cultural knowledge and perspectives. (For more details on his philosophy of communication see Naess (1953). This work will be reissued in the Selected Works of Arne Naess to be published in English by Klewer in 2000.) Naess is well placed to identify the main features of the emerging grass-roots environmental movement, which is supported by social activists from all parts of the political spectrum. The shallow-deep spectrum he describes is not the same as the old right-left split. It cuts across many conventional distinctions.

In his talk and paper Naess explained the difference between the short-term, shallow and the long-range deep ecology movements in broad terms. He explained that the distinctive aspects 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 recognize 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.

In 1972, not many people appreciated that Naess was characterizing a grass-roots social movement, not stating his personal ultimate philosophy. Since then, he has articulated a set of platform principles to clarify matters. Grass-roots political movements often join people with diverse ultimate beliefs and backgrounds. In order to state the shared objectives of the movement a platform is usually put forth. The platform presents the more general principles that unite the group in terms of shared projects, aims and values.

Naess and others have proposed a set of eight principles to characterize the deep ecology movement as part of the general ecology movement. These principles are endorsed by people from a diversity of backgrounds who share common concerns for the planet, its many beings and ecological communities. In many Western nations supporters of the platform principles stated below come from different religious and philosophical backgrounds. Their political affiliations differ considerably. What unites them is a long-range vision of what is necessary to protect the integrity of the Earth's ecological communities and values. Supporters of the principles have a diversity of ultimate beliefs. "Ultimate beliefs" here refers to their own basic metaphysical, personal and religious grounds for their values, actions and support for the deep ecology movement. Different people and cultures have different mythologies and stories. Nonetheless, they can support the platform and work for solutions to our shared environmental crisis. A diversity of practices is emerging, but there is considerable overlap, as can be seen in hundreds of environmental conflicts all over the world.

Supporters of the platform principles stated below come from all walks of life, and a wide variety of cultures and places. Because they live in different places, the courses of practical action that follow from commitment to the platform are also diverse. Each person has something unique to contribute

by living their own ecosophies. Here are the proposed platform principles of the deep ecology movement as originally formulated by Arne Naess and George Sessions in 1984 while on a hiking trip in Death Valley California:

The Platform Principles of the Deep Ecology Movement

1. 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.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realizations of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital human needs.
4. 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.
5. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is 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 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.
8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation to directly or indirectly try to implement the necessary changes.

(Bill Devall and George Sessions, 1985, p. 70. Note that this platform is discussed in an exchange of papers between Stan Rowe and Arne Naess, published originally in *The Trumpeter* 1996,13, 1, and now online at <<http://www.ecospherics.net>>.)

Anyone who endorses these eight principles, is called by Naess and others a supporter of the deep ecology movement, not a deep ecologist. Naess feels that “deep ecologist” is too immodest, and “shallow ecologist” is unkind language. The word “supporter” is more Gandhian and rich for interpretation. As mentioned, Naess stresses that those who support these principles can do so from a wide range of different ultimate views. Just as birds build different kinds of nests in different habitats, so human cultures which grow out of ecological places with respect for their inherent values develop diverse forms of practice, technology and social order.

Naess calls his own ultimate philosophy Ecosophy T. It is deeply influenced by Norwegian *friluftsliv* (a movement to experience living in the outdoors, see Henderson, 1997), Gandhian nonviolence, Mahayana Buddhism and Spinozan pantheism. T refers to Tvergastein, Naess's mountain hut in Norway, where much of Ecosophy T was worked out. The T also refers to the Norwegian word for interpretation (tolkning) which is central to his philosophy of language and communication. A basic norm in Naess's Ecosophy T is Self realization!--for all beings. The Self to be realized for humans is not the ego self (small s), but the larger ecological Self (cap S). This self/Self distinction has affinities with Mahayana Buddhism. Naess says we can realize our ecological Selves in a number of ways. The way he talks most about is extension of identification. He prefaces this by saying that he assumes one is well integrated and has a healthy ego so as to avoid projection of the small self and its shadow.

Sometimes people confuse the "deep ecology movement" as described above, with Naess' own ultimate ecocentric philosophy, Ecosophy T. Naess calls his own ultimate philosophy Ecosophy T, not deep ecology. It is on the basis of Ecosophy T that he personally supports the platform principles of the deep ecology movement.

Naess tries to make his whole view surveyable by starting with only the one norm, Self-Realization! Self-realization! is taken to imply: "Self-realization for all beings!" The exclamation point is used to mark that this is not a mere description, but that it says something that ought to be. Naess feels the norm as a basis of his own lived ecosophy. He urges others to develop their own ecosophies based on their ultimate views. Self-realization for humans he says, can be achieved in a variety of ways. His own approach is to extend his sense of identification to a larger sense of Self. Humans naturally have this capacity as Naess and others have observed cross-culturally. We have the capacity to connect with a much larger sense of self, transcending ego, by extending our sense of identification beyond the usual narrow focus on ego to a wider sphere of relationships. It is not difficult for us to identify with other living beings. We can actually practice or cultivate this capacity. One way is to practice extending our care and affection. We can also explore this larger Self in a variety of other ways.

Many other authors have developed ecosophies very similar to Naess's based on the idea of extending awareness and care to a larger ecological Self. However, other supporters of the deep ecology movement have ecosophies which do not start with the Self-realization! norm. Warwick Fox (1990) and I have both observed that the extension of self and the idea of the ecological Self overlaps in many ways with work in transpersonal psychology. Fox calls these Self-realization types of ecosophies transpersonal ecologies. (Today we call them transpersonal ecosophies and their psychological study is transpersonal ecology.) Matthew Fox's (1988) Creation Theology (which has a long history as a minority tradition in Christianity) is a transpersonal ecology in the form of a Christian philosophy and practice that finds the Christ principle and power of love revealed in the ongoing creation of the world. It is this that we should reverence. This opens us to the expansive sense of Self. A Mahayana Buddhist, concerned for the deliverance of all sentient beings, can easily support the deep ecology movement principles.

Other writers who support the platform principles of the deep ecology movement have criticized the extension of self identification. Some prefer to find their ultimate premises and ecosophies grounded in a different conception of self, emphasizing the social self--in some cases, or stressing the difference between the way self identity develops for women in contrast to men in our traditions. In this way, some supporters of the deep ecology movement are ecofeminists, some are social ecologists, some Christians.

No supporters of the deep ecology movement as characterized above could be anti-human, as is sometimes alleged. Some vociferous environmentalists who claim to be supporters of the movement have said and written things that are misanthropic in tone. They have not explained how such statements are consistent with commitment to platform principle number one, which recognizes the inherent worth of all beings, including humans. Supporters of the deep ecology movement deplore antihuman statements and actions. They support Gandhian nonviolence in word and deed. Arne Naess says that he is a supporter of the ecofeminist, social ecology, social justice, bioregional, and peace movements. He believes that the platform principles of the deep ecology movement are broad enough to be this inclusive.

Another dispute has centered on the critique of anthropocentrism offered by some supporters of the deep ecology movement. "Anthropocentrism" has a number of different meanings. We must not let verbal misunderstandings be divisive. When we defend our loved ones or are moved more by human

suffering than the suffering of other beings, we are acting as descendants, parents, friends, lovers, etc. One can support the deep ecology movement consistent with such feelings. What is inconsistent is refusing to recognize the inherent worth of other beings to the extent that one is willing to allow unmerciful exploitation and destruction of life forms purely for human convenience and profit. Anthropocentrism as a bias against other life forms fails to recognize that we are part of these lives and they are part of ours. Our human self in the deepest sense cannot be separated from the earth from which we have grown. Anthropocentrism is objectionable when it emphasizes "humans first!" regardless of the consequences to other beings.

When we explore our own embodied, in place, ecological Self we discover our affinities with other beings as part of our humanity. This once more emphasizes that the platform principles refer to the intrinsic worth of all beings, including humans. Supporters of the deep ecology movement platform are committed to recognizing and respecting in word and deed the inherent worth of humans and other beings. This leads to actions that try to minimize our own impacts on ecological communities and other human cultures. In order to start the process of lessening our impacts diverse transition strategies are vital. In the area of business, for example, The Natural Step (Nattrass and Altomare 1999) is a process of lessening negative impacts and encouraging positive ones. It uses bottom up initiatives, diverse leaders, and back and forth play between workers and leaders. For more on industrial ecology and new values and directions in work and business see Hawken (1993 & 1999) and on higher value leadership see Secretan (1996.)

If one accepts the platform principles of the deep ecology movement, this involves commitment to respect the intrinsic values of richness and diversity. This in turn leads to a critique of industrial society. This critique cuts across cultural boundaries. It is presented from both within and outside of industrial societies. It is partly from such a critique that support for indigenous cultures arises within Modern societies. The gist of the critique goes like this:

Industrial culture represents itself as the only acceptable model for progress and development. However, application of this model and its financial and technological systems to all areas of the planet results in destruction of habitat, extinction of species, and destruction of indigenous cultures. The biodiversity crisis is about loss of critical species, populations and processes that perform necessary biological functions, and it is also about loss of multitudes of other values which are good in themselves and depend on preservation of natural diversity and wild evolutionary processes. Industrial society is a monoculture in agriculture and forestry, and in every other way. Its development models construe the Earth as only raw material to be used to satisfy consumption and production to meet not only vital needs, but inflated desires whose satisfaction requires more and more consumption. Its monocultures destroy cultural and biological diversity, both of which are good in themselves and critical to our survival and flourishing. The older industrial development models are now superseded by the ecological approaches referred to in this paper. (See websites listed below.)

If we do not accept the Industrial development model, what then? Endorsing the deep ecology platform principles might lead us to study the ecosophies of aboriginal and indigenous people so as to learn from them values and practices that can help us to dwell wisely in neighboring places. We also can learn from the wisdom of our places and the many beings who inhabit them. At the same time, the ecocentric values implied by the platform lead us to recognize that all human cultures have a mutual interest in seeing Earth and its diversity continue for our sake, for its own sake and because we love it. Most want to flourish and realize themselves in harmony with other beings and cultures. How can we better develop common understandings that enable us to work with civility toward harmony with other cultures, creatures and beings? The deep ecology movement platform principles

are guides in this direction. Respect for diversity leads us to recognize the forms of ecological wisdom that grow out of specific places and contexts. Supporters of the deep ecology movement embrace place-specific, ecological wisdom, and vernacular technology practices. No one philosophy and technology is applicable to the whole planet. Diversity on every level is good!

In the West there is a renewal of Christian practices that support ecotheology based on a reverential spirit for Creation. The ferment of this with the new ecocentric paradigms--influenced by field ecology and leading edge science--has led writers like Thomas Berry (1988) to begin fashioning a "new story" as a basis for Western initiatives in creating an ecologically wise and harmonious society. All of these efforts can be seen as compatible with support for the platform principles of the deep ecology movement, with perhaps some slight modifications.

Bioregionalism (see *The Planet Drum*, and also Sale 1985) is an activist form of support for the deep ecology movement. The Wildlands Project, The Arne Naess Selected Works Project, the Ecoagriculture Movement, the Ecoforestry Institute and Institute for Deep Ecology education programs, and the Ecostery Foundation are a few examples of applications of deep ecology movement principles to work in support of biodiversity, preservation of wildness and ecological restoration. Other deep efforts include Ecopsychology (Roszak, et al 1995), *The Natural Step*, the Turning Point Project, the project to measure our ecological footprint (Rees and Wackernagel 1996), and *Redefining Progress* and its measures by means of a General Progress Index or GPI.

For specific applications to Forestry see Drengson and Taylor (1997). For examples of how Buddhist thought and practice have influenced some Western ecosophies see the works of Joanna Macy (1991) and Gary Snyder (1990). For applications and critiques from Third World perspectives see the writings of Vandana Shiva (1993) and Helena Norberg-Hodge (1991). On trade, the global economy and relocalization see Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith (1996). For more on natural capitalism and industrial ecology see Paul Hawken, Amory and Hunter Lovins (1999). To learn more about ecophilosophy and the movement to deep and diverse values check out the illustrative (not exhaustive) sample of references and websites listed below.

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Some Websites relevant to the deep ecology movement From cross-cultural, ultimate philosophies to specific practical actions

1. The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy is at: <http://trumpeter.athabascau.ca>
2. Ecoforestry information is at: <http://ecoforestry.ca>
3. For The Turning Point Project see: <http://www.Turningpoint.org> Note: Their ad campaign on changing to ecologically responsible practices is at: <http://www.turnpoint.org>
4. For more on international trade and globalization see the International Forum on Globalization at: <http://www.ifg.org>
5. The Natural Step approach to changing business practices started in Sweden. Read more at: <http://www.naturalstep.org>
6. For more on redefining and measuring progress, see: <http://www.rprogress.org>
7. In Atlantic Canada local redefining of progress is described at: <http://www.gpiatlantic.org>
8. Bill Devall's website of deep ecology movement material is at: <http://www.deep-ecology.net>
9. Ted Mosquin's ecocentrically oriented website is at: <http://www.ecospherics.net>
10. For the Wildlands Project see: <http://www.twp.org>

11. The Institute for Deep Ecology is at: <http://www.deep-ecology.org>
12. The Earth Institute is at: <http://www.nwei.org>
13. The Land Institute is at: http://www.landinst_development.midkan.net
14. Ecopsychology is located at: <http://www.isis.csu Hayward.edu>
15. For more on natural capitalism see: <http://www.naturalcapitalism.org>

Other Ecocentric Texts