

Deep Ecology Platform: Moving it from Biocentric to Ecocentric

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Reprinted with minor change from an article entitled "From shallow to deep ecological philosophy." The Trumpeter 13 (1): 26-31, 1996.

Note: From the Earth-ethic perspective and for purposes of discussion the first four Articles of the Deep Ecology Eight-Point Platform (Drengson & Inoue 1995) are revisited here, with explanatory comment. This revision expands the Platform Articles moving their valuation perspective from biocentric to ecocentric.

Platform Article No. 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."

Ecocentric Rephrasing: *"The well-being and flourishing of the living Earth and its many organic/inorganic parts have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes."*

Rationale for the change: If the idea of the living Earth is stressed, people may, in time, look upon "their environments" as alive, deserving of the same attention, affection and care as charismatic animals and plants.

Platform Article No. 2

"Richness and diversity of life-forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves."

Ecocentric Rephrasing: *"Richness and diversity of Earth's ecosystems, as well as the organic forms that they nurture and support, contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves."*

Rationale for the change: In ecological parlance, diversity includes richness (number of different things, such as species, in a given area) as one of its dimensions, though the two are usefully paired for emphasis. A "marsh/duck" example may explain the suggested change. Over long evolutionary time, marsh ecosystems brought forth ducks as well as a swarm of other semi-aquatic organisms. From this the argument follows that diversity of marsh ecosystems is more important than the diversity of ducks; marshes can exist without ducks but ducks (now in decline) cannot exist without marshes. Similarly, people in today's unconscionable numbers are decreased (qualitatively if not yet quantitatively) as thoughtless activities ravish the diversity of Earth's ecosystems.

Platform Article No. 3

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

Ecocentric Rephrasing: *"Humans have no right to reduce the diversity of Earth's ecosystems and their vital constituents, organic and inorganic."*

Rationale for Change: The original ending phrase, "except to satisfy vital human needs," might be interpreted as a giveaway. Satisfying human needs must be balanced against maintaining ecodiversity. For example, the conventional practices of industrial agriculture destroy ecosystem diversity (destroying richness of species, richness of soil types, richness of minor landforms, richness of water regimes). Such practices can only be justified, if at all, by the preservation of large areas of native grassland, woodland and wetland representative of each agricultural region's natural suite of ecosystems. At reasonable population levels (a world with less than one billion people), vital human needs could be satisfied without obliterating all the sun-powered prairies, rain forests, coral reefs, etc. with their evolving organic/inorganic constituents.

Platform Article No. 4

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

Ecocentric Rephrasing: *"The flourishing of human life and culture is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The creative flourishing of Earth and its multitudinous nonhuman parts, organic and inorganic, requires such a decrease."*

Platform Article No. 5

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

(This platform article is already ecocentric)

Platform Article No. 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."

(This Article is already ecocentric)

Platform Article No. 7

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

(This Article is already ecocentric)

Article No. 8

"Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to participate in the attempt to implement the necessary changes."

(This Article is already ecocentric)

Literature Cited

Drengson, Alan & Yuichi Inoue, 1995. The Deep Ecology Movement, An Introductory Anthology. Berkeley. North Atlantic Books.

[Other Ecocentric Texts](#)