



# Deep Ecology

# Debates on Environmental Ethics

- **Environmental ethics** is the part of environmental philosophy which considers extending the traditional boundaries of ethics from solely including humans to including the non-human world.
- Environmental philosophies (human-nature relationship)
- Development of environmental ethics has been closely linked to growth of the American wilderness movement – i.e. battles over the creation, preservation and extension of wilderness areas from the backdrop against which the environmental community has examined and re-examined its ethical responsibilities.
- American culture resembles remarkable system of national parks.

Wilderness or wildlands (usually in the plural) are natural environments on Earth that have not been significantly modified by human activity

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- Roderick Nash and Stephen Fox wrote –

The history of American environmentalism as a struggle between preservationists who wish to preserve nature and wild species for their own sake and utilitarian's who, with the help of science and rational management, transform nature into useful commodities [maximizes utility] (1967)

an ongoing discussion or argument

- Contemporary debate on environmental ethics has been a factor which relates to nature rather than to culture.

# Wilderness thinking

- Roderick Nash's (an environmental historian) in his book *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1967) concerns the attitude of Americans' toward the idea of wilderness.
- Nash discusses the different attitudes that humans have toward nature. He presents America's anthropocentric view as the main enemy to all wilderness preservation.
- Nash argues that an ecocentric view is ideal and may work in the long run, but perhaps the preservation of nature and wilderness for the sake of holding resources out for the preservation of our own species would be more salient. most noticeable or important.

[Ecocentrism is a philosophy that emphasizes the importance of all living things including the importance of their environment.]

# Preservationist/ biocentric Vs imperial/ utilitarian/ anthropocentric

- Two classic polarities of environmental ethics – the opposition of utilitarian to preservationist, and an anthropocentric to biocentric attitudes towards nature
- Lynn White (1967), a Californian historian located the 'historical roots of ecologic crisis' in the Judeo-Christian belief that man was meant to dominate nature. the job of supervising or taking care of something, such as an organization or property.
  - White's attack led many Christians to look towards reviving traditions of stewardship that had been suppressed within their own religion [Non-western religions are believed to be more in harmony with nature]

# *Scientific industrialism*

1. : of or relating to fields or lands or their ownership. agrarian reforms.

2. : of, relating to, or concerned with farmers or farming interests

- Human salvation lies in the future [evolutionism], not in the return to an agrarian or pre-agrarian past. The task is to tame industrialism and temper its excesses, not to turn one's back.
- Scientific forestry inaugurates a more hopeful stage, but the habits of many lifetimes die hard.
- Wilderness lovers are in the main quite hostile to agriculture – evidently, going back to nature does not imply going back to the land.
- The dominant environmental tradition in the US – free flowing rivers and natural forests are cherished by environmentalists for their beauty and ecological value.
- Support for the national park movement in India comes mainly from the international conservation organisations, and from a class of big game hunters turned preservationist (who include many former maharajahs)



# Deep Ecology and Shallow Ecology


- ➔ The Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess coined the phrase deep ecology to describe deep ecological awareness.
- ➔ Deep ecology is the foundation is a branch of philosophy known as ecophilosophy [Arne Naess prefers the term ecosophy]
- ➔ Shallow ecology is anthropocentric, or human centered. It views humans as above or outside of nature, as the source of all value, and ascribes only instrumental, or 'use', value to nature.


## Cont.


- 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.

Interview with Arne Naess (1982) – “Simple in Means, Rich in Ends” – provides a short, clear introduction to the main ideas of Deep Ecology.






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- Naess claims that the essence of Deep Ecology is to ask deeper questions – questioning the values of our society, and to the development of a total view.
  - He discusses the importance of the norms of ecological equality and *Self-realization*.
  - Naess further argues that science and technology alone cannot solve our environmental problems.
  - Since logic can't prove one's starting point, people must go beyond narrow rationality and reliance on “authorities” and learn to cultivate and trust their basic intuitions as a basis for environmental action and meaningful personal values.


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- 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 Naess claims that the cultivation of an ecological self involves a materially simple lifestyle, and values that maximize the quality and richness of our experience.

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- Another major area of concern for Deep Ecology theorists is now being referred to as “ecopsychology” [ecosophy].

Ecopsychology is the study of the psychological connection between humans and nature, and how this connection affects identity, health, and well-being

- Concern with the psychological/spiritual dimensions of humanity's relationship to wild nature, which can be traced back, and ultimately to the primal peoples of the world.
  - Arne Naess's concept of human self realization (the “ecological self”) directly addresses the key issues of ecopsychology.
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- This recent interest in ecopsychology, and a concern for a renewed sense of connectedness to Nature, has begun to refocus attention on Thoreau's enigmatic statement that "in wildness is the preservation of the world".
  - In the beauty of wild nature, Henry David Thoreau saw the source of the human spirit of independence and self-reliance, which were necessary in order for humans to keep on surviving and growing as a species.
  - The Deep Ecology movement holds that "the health of natural systems should be our first concern" while trying to create a "culture of wilderness" from within civilization.

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- Naess's "The Deep Ecology Movement," written in 1986 is the best short contemporary statement of the deep ecology position.
  - Naess points out that the Deep ecology movement is characterized by the deep *questioning process*, and by environmental activism which is spiritual.
  - Spiritual activism means, for Naess, acting from the basis of a fundamental philosophic/religious ecosophy (or "total view") and acting nonviolently.
  - The distinction between shallow and deep ecology was made in the early seventies by the philosopher Arne Naess and has now been widely accepted as a very useful terminology to refer to the major division within contemporary environmental thought.

# Shallow Vs. Deep Ecology

- **Shallow ecology is anthropocentric** – 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 from the natural environment' nor does it separate anything else from it. It does not see the world as a collection of isolated objects but rather as a network of phenomena that are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent.
- Deep ecology recognises the intrinsic values of all living beings and views humans as just one particular strand in the web of life.
- Naess (1973: 95) characterizes the 'shallow' ecological movement as one that fights pollution and resource depletion in order to preserve human health and affluence, while the 'deep' ecological movement operates out of a deep-seated respect and even veneration for ways and forms of life, and accords them an 'equal right to live and blossom' [*Live and let live!*].

the state of having a great deal of money; wealth

respect for a person or thing that you are devoted to



# Conservationists and Wilderness

- In the 1970s, Wilderness Areas, National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, and other protected areas were still viewed primarily as recreational and scenic resources—not as ecological reserves. Until the 1980s, conservationists argued most frequently from a recreational (including aesthetic) standpoint for the preservation of Wilderness.
- Such conservationists with a strategic decision – believed that only a limited amount of land would receive Wilderness Area designation; they wanted it to be the areas in which they most enjoyed hiking, camping, fishing, climbing, and hunting.

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- A different situation exists today in the wilderness preservation movement than ever before.
- The New Conservation Movement has largely turned its back on the old concept of Wilderness as primarily a recreational resource.
- Their arguments are solidly based in conservation biology, and recognize biological diversity as the fundamental value [E.g. 'Ecotourism'].

Ecotourism is defined as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the wellbeing of local people and involves interpretation and education”

Social ecologists examine how people interact with their environment and how these relationships might be modified to produce a more sustainable society

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- There is a movement toward creating a “culture of the wilderness” from within contemporary civilization.
- The Deep Ecology philosophers and the struggles and arguments which have taken place between them and the Green movement, the Social Ecologists, and the Ecofeminists are all part of the emerging realization that this could be tried.
- Deep Ecology thinkers insist that the natural world has value in its own right, that the health of natural systems should be our first concern, and that this best serves the interests of humans as well.

Ecofeminism is a political movement that combines feminism and environmentalism to analyze the relationship between humans and the natural world. Ecofeminists believe that the domination of women and the degradation of the environment are both consequences of patriarchy and capitalism.

Neocolonialism is when a state continues to exert political and economic control over a nominally independent state, but through non-direct means. It's the continuation of colonial realities and representations after formal colonization has ended.

## Criticism

- Some people from the Third World who express a suspicion that Deep Ecology is a new variant of Western domination and "neocolonialism": they fear that people of the Third World will be pushed out of their homes to make more room for spectacular animals.
- Some authors have expressed the opinion that Deep Ecology is for the rich nations that can afford the luxury of vast wilderness as habitat for wild species.

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- Arne Naess argues that “what we need today is a tremendous expansion of ecological thinking.”
  - Most native societies around the world had three common characteristics: they had an intimate, conscious relationship with their place; they were stable "sustainable" cultures, often lasting for thousands of years; and they had a rich ceremonial and ritual life.
  - For example: The Tukano Indians of the Northwest Amazon River basin, guided by their shamans, make use of various myths and rituals that prevent over-hunting and over-fishing. They view their universe as a circuit of energy in which the entire cosmos participates.



polemic: a speech or piece of writing expressing a strongly critical attack on or controversial opinion about someone or something.

## Gandhi's Environmental Ethic

- From Chipko to the 'Save the Narmada Movement' (Narmada Bachao Andolan) of the present time, environmental activists have relied heavily on Gandhian techniques of non-violent protest or *satyagraha*, and have drawn abundantly on Gandhi's polemic against heavy industrialization.
- The environmentalists argue that the Mahatma Gandhi foresaw the ecological crisis of modern industrial society: *Hind Swaraj* (1909), has given us an 'alternative perspective' on development while explaining how 'the current mode of development is exploitative of man by man and of nature by man'.
- Gandhi's approach helps to provide greater equity, or "distributive justice," by promoting technology that is appropriate to "basic needs. He believes in *swadeshi* (i.e. local self-reliance and use of local knowledge and abilities) and *swaraj* (i.e. independent development that leads to equity and justice).



# Naess' systematization of Gandhian Ethics

- Self-realization presupposes a search for truth: Arne Naess deep ecology is not fundamentally about the value of nature per se, it is about who we are in the larger scheme of things. He notes the identification of the 'self' with 'Self' in terms that it is used in the Bhagavad Gita (that is, as the unity which is one) as the source of deep ecological attitudes.
- The link between self-realization and Naess' environmental philosophy can be clearly seen in his discussion of the connection between nonviolence and self-realization in his analysis of the context of Gandhian political ethics.
- 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 (1965: 28-33)

## Reference

- ▶ Naess, Arne. (1973). 'The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement: A summary'. *Inquiry*, 16 (1): 95-100.
- ▶ 'Deep Ecology', *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy* – 2nd/ 7/18/2008 18:08 Page 206-2011.