

Nature and Life

Nature and Life:

Essays on Deep Ecology and Applied Ethics

By

Md. Munir Hossain Talukder

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



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This book first published 2018

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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Cover photograph by Zaheen A-Rahman

Cover designed by Shabnam Akhter & Zaheen A-Rahman

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-0920-6

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-0920-7

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PREFACE

HOLMES ROLSTON III

Munir Talukder is an environmental philosopher in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is commonly regarded as one of the lesser developing nations, with many in poverty, so those of us in the developed West might not expect an environmental philosopher from that nation to be a deep ecologist. Munir Talukder comes as something of a surprise. But here he is.

Bangladesh has been making significant progress fighting poverty, so considering their development goals is timely. Talukder argues for a complete system of environmental values, both intrinsic and instrumental. He takes his inspiration from Arne Naess, Norwegian philosopher in one of the most developed nations on Earth. Nevertheless, Naess found the Western lifestyle, for all its wealth, incomplete and distorted.

Naess wrote: “Progress has in all seriousness been measured by the rate of energy consumption and the acquisition and accumulation of material objects. What seems to better the material prerequisites for ‘the good life’ is given priority without asking if life is experienced as good” (See Chapter 1). Westerners had become worried about the *standard of living* instead of the *quality of life*.

Now it can seem quite rational for a philosopher in a developing nation to wish to listen to a powerful critic of developed nations. However, Bangladesh might be better off seeking a higher quality of life rather than attempting to imitate those Westerners whose search for wealth has actually left them impoverished. The rich countries too are filled with poor people—often economically and often also in this deeper sense of poor.

Nor is it only one somewhat eccentric philosopher like Arne Naess who has been asking about the quality of life in developed, over-developed countries. The ethics of development is a live philosophical issue globally.

Global inequalities in income increased in the 20th century by orders of magnitude out of proportion to anything experienced before. The distance between the incomes of the richest and poorest country was about 3 to 1 in 1820, 35 to 1 in 1950, 44 to 1 in 1973, and 72 to 1 in 1992 (United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP), 2000, p.6).

In 2017, this may have reached 100 to 1.

Amartya Sen, Nobel Prize winning economist, has been concerned about “focusing on production and prosperity as the essence of progress, treating people as the means through which that productive process is brought about rather than seeing the lives of people as the ultimate concern and treating production and prosperity merely as means to those lives” (Sen, 2004, p.41). The primary objective of development should be the increased enrichment of people’s lives—the quality of their lives, their well-being.

Amartya Sen refers to this as people developing their “capabilities”. Talukder finds this already in Naess when he states: “Naess maintains that human beings have the interest of preserving their existence. However, this interest is basically the realization of their ‘inherent potentialities’” (p. 14). Such wisdom about making a life beyond making a living does go back millennia in the West: “A man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12.15). “Thou shalt not covet” is one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20).

Talukder is well versed in ancient Greek philosophy. See his insights into how Plato’s ideas of self-development and Aristotle’s anticipation of “biocentric holism” figure into his deep ecology. He is likewise comfortable moving from East to West and back again (See his Chapters 2, 3, and 4). He analyzes the “self–nature relation in both Western and Eastern cultural traditions”. Although the West has exaggerated the differences between humans and nature, Talukder further argues that, both West and East, “the common cultural value ‘identification’ can be demonstrated to build up a harmonious coexistence with nature” (p. 30).

In the West, Arne Naess, as we have noted, emphasized a self-realized identification with nature in that, “Deep ecology considers all organisms, plants, and so forth, as a ‘total-field image’. So, deep ecology dissolves the ‘man-in-environment’ concept and establishes a more symbiotic relationship; a relationship which is intrinsically valuable and based on an enlightened principle ‘the equal right to live and blossom’” (pp. 13-14).

In the East, “Buddhism persistently emphasizes meditative awareness about the interconnectedness of all life forms” (p. 26). “The Hindus are alive to their environment in which they live. They have respect for the flora and fauna. They believe in the ecological balance of creation” (p. 35). Likewise, the Chinese have a “conception of dynamic, mutually constitutive, internal relatedness” (p. 37). Talukder is fully aware of the tensions and contradictions between East and West (pp. 30-32), but he returns to Naess

illustrating that there are common values that the West and East share which can be used when seeking ecological harmony (pp. 41ff).

I once myself asked the question whether the East can help teach the West how to value nature and, with regard to this, I found Talukder's analysis of my own worries insightful (pp. 41ff).

Seeking such identification and relatedness to our environment, the issue of how much and to whom needs to be clarified. Talukder next worries about a position called "balanced caring" (Chapter 5). Perhaps no one will object to "balanced caring", but no one will know how to do it without further guidance. Balanced caring, the argument further proceeds, means giving more attention to "intimate caring (our concern for near and dear) and humanitarian caring (our concern for people in general)" (p. 67).

One advocate, Michael Slote, claims, "it is morally good to care more for intimates than other people. In fact, caring more for intimates is a moral requirement for virtuous people." He adds that, "[o]ne can and should care more about some friends or relations than about others" (p. 67). There is an old adage: "charity begins at home." Slote has modified his account somewhat to allow for supererogation. Those who care for distant others have in a "most praiseworthy way gone beyond the call of duty" (p. 74).

This scheme of priorities and duties, of course, leaves caring for the natural world at the bottom of the list, so Talukder needs to refute, even reverse, such priority. "In the reverse account, the caring person is not only caring for those who are closer to their heart but also for those who are less close. In fact, the latter is more favorable. Thus, according to our closeness scale, favoring the environment rather than favoring oneself is a virtuous character trait. Eventually, this account could contribute significantly to the broader moral perspective, such as the relationship between humans and nature" (p. 72).

Talukder concludes with his account of "virtue ethics and the human-environment relationships" (Chapter 6). Yes, we may need to recover some old virtues, in both the West and East, but we also need to discover some new virtues: participation in the intrinsic values in nature in an ecological mode. Perhaps readers from the West will think we do not need to go to Bangladesh to learn this. Talukder agrees, since he takes his inspiration from Arne Naess. But readers from both the East and West will be surprised (as we remarked at the beginning) to hear this so forcefully from a keen and insightful Bangladesh philosopher.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Alhamdulillah. I am most grateful to *Allah, Rabbil 'alamin* for His uncountable mercy and blessings upon us.

This book explores some recent thoughts and trends in environmental philosophy and applied ethics. The topics selected here are contemporary and offered in various Masters and PhD programs worldwide. Deep ecology is comparatively a new trend in environmental thinking and it has raised important questions about our current values, beliefs, and attitudes towards nature. It holds that the underlying metaphysics of the human–nature relationship is problematic. Developing an ecological consciousness through identification with nature is a must for deep ecologists. Although the solution they proposed to overcome ecological crisis is not beyond criticism, many environmental organizations and activists find the deep ecological approach worthwhile as a means to maintain a harmonious relationship with nature.

Applied ethics attempts to rethink our existing values and virtues in everything from health care to multiculturalism. Unlike traditional ethical theories, applied ethics is devoted to the analysis and examination of moral challenges in our personal, professional, social, cultural, environmental, and even political lives.

I remember the struggles as a young researcher because of the scarcity of local resources in environmental philosophy and applied ethics. I therefore feel an obligation to provide some reflections on these fields, and that is why some chapters of the book have focused on the context of Bangladesh.

This book is primarily for research students. However, scholars from other levels and disciplines can find alternative ways of thinking here.

A lot of people helped me to develop the ideas explored in this book. I am sincerely thankful to my respected teachers, both home and abroad. In particular, I would like to thank my PhD research supervisor, eminent political philosopher, and noted applied ethicist, Emeritus Professor Ten Chin Liew (C. L. Ten), Department of Philosophy, National University of Singapore, Singapore. I would also like to thank Associate Professor Tan Sor Hoon, Associate Professor Cecilia Lim, Department of Philosophy at the National University of Singapore, Singapore; Professor Anders Nordgren, Professor Göran Collste, Centre for Applied Ethics (CTE) at

Linköping University, Sweden; Dr. Mariëtte van den Hoven, Dr. Ineke Bolt, Professor JJM van Delden, Ethics Institute at Utrecht University, the Netherlands; Professor Marcel Verweij, Editor-in-Chief, *Public Health Ethics Journal* (Oxford); and Professor Fahmina Ahmed, Department of Philosophy at Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh. These caring mentors taught me philosophical skills, theoretical and applied ethics at various stages of my education and career. I thank renowned historian Professor Sharifuddin Ahmed, Chairman, Department of History and Philosophy, North South University, Bangladesh, for his insightful suggestions about culture, morality, and history. I also thank my esteemed colleagues and enthusiastic students at the Department of Philosophy, Jahangirnagar University and North South University, Bangladesh, for their valuable support in many ways.

Finally, this book would not have been published without valuable support and inspiration from Professor Holmes Rolston III, University Distinguished Professor and Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus, Colorado State University, USA, the founding father of environmental ethics and philosophy discipline, and one of my favorite environmental philosophers. His illuminating comments on environmental ethics and philosophy during his visit at NUS and later as my PhD thesis examiner enlightened me. Even though he is very busy, he was kind enough to write the preface of this book. I am extremely thankful to him for this.

Each letter, word, and sentence of this book is for the satisfaction of my *Rabb* (the Creator), *Allah, Rabbil 'alamin*. May *Allah Rahmanur Rahim* accept it. *Ameen*.

Md. Munir Hossain Talukder

CHAPTER ONE

ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS AND DEEP ECOLOGY¹

Introduction

Environmental crisis is a global phenomenon experienced by every individual in the world. This problem is unique in the sense that it cannot be solved immediately and a broader approach, with the participation of scientists, researchers, environmentalists, academics, religious scholars, social workers, and philosophers, is needed. Several initiatives have tried to find out the root cause of the environmental crisis. For example, conservation biologists are attempting to assess the level of degradation in the sea, ocean, and rainforests, while geographers are measuring climate change in various regions throughout the globe. Environmental historians are helping to uncover people's attitudes towards preserving nature in both the past and present.

After the emergence of ecology as a distinct science, it was believed that this science was sufficient to solve the ecological crisis. Most environmental pollutions are created by chemical contamination or a change in chemical composition and, therefore, ecology is the best option to improve environmental conditions. However, philosophers, such as Arne Naess have claimed that scientific knowledge based on ecology is not enough. Ecology might provide a basis for environmental thought but a much deeper analysis from the philosophical viewpoint is urgently needed. So, what we need to solve this problem is to change the traditionally inherited philosophical mindset. Naess, therefore, explains the environmental crisis from a deeper perspective.

This chapter discusses the philosophical underpinnings of the environmental crisis. I will discuss the scientific perspective, philosophical viewpoints, and the initiatives that have been taken so far in order to

¹ An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the Faculty Research Project Seminar 2016, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Jahangirnagar University.

address the environmental crisis. Finally, I will consider in detail how deep ecology, especially Arne Naess's ecosophy, has constructed the environmental crisis.

Environmental Crisis—Scientific Viewpoints

Environmental crisis was initially primarily a concern for scientists, who warned us about the current situation of the universe. Our Earth is facing a serious natural crisis, which had not been identified before. The development of scientific technology and advancement of scientific knowledge allow us to realize the present environmental status. Scientists are now providing information and suggesting appropriate policies to overcome the environmental crisis. Since the 1970s, numerous scientific research works have contributed to raising awareness about the environmental crisis. The problem is seen as an unprecedented threat to humanity. The UN, through the wing of UNEP, has regularly published a Global Environmental Report for the last few decades. Therefore, the environmental crisis is one of the most pressing problems for scientists. Scientists view environmental crisis as a global phenomenon, which is not limited to any particular region or place and with multiple dimensions to its powers of destruction. The primary concern for them is the destruction of the ecosystem, where all living creatures grow and live.

The environmental crisis from the scientific viewpoint can be summarized as “[m]ultiple forms of destruction leading to a possible collapse of the planetary ecosystem that supports life through global warming and other massive disruptions” (*Summary of Global Problems and Crises* 2016). This ecologically based viewpoint has been illustrated from different perspectives:

Firstly, global destruction of forests and phytoplankton in the oceans (these capture carbon dioxide - 59% land, 41% oceans hold moisture and soil, preserve species, moderate the environment and *give off oxygen*). Secondly, worldwide soil erosion and desertification (the world has lost 1/5 of its arable land in the last decade). Causes: raising beef, lumbering, use of wood for fuel, clear cutting for crops or profit. Thirdly, worldwide burning of fossil fuels, primarily oil and coal, and burning of wood in the third world. Fourthly, harming of forests, lakes, and their ecosystems by acid rain (including Alaska, Canada, Norway, Eastern U.S., Germany, etc.). Fifthly, proliferation of nuclear waste hazards, and massive amounts of other toxic waste. Sixthly, worldwide shrinking of fresh water supplied through pollution and diminishing aquifers. Seventhly, spreading ozone holes resulting from long lasting chlorofluorocarbon gases. Eighthly, massive extinction of species worldwide connected with the above factors.

Finally, flooding of coastal areas world-wide as the ocean levels rise: displacing hundreds of millions of people and burying a large portion of the world's prime agricultural lands. (*Summary of Global Problems and Crises* 2016)

Therefore, the environmental crisis consists of the changing ecosystem; the destruction of soil and land; carbon emissions; acid rain; the production of nuclear waste; water, air, and land pollution; ozone layer depletion; flooding and cyclones.

Taylor defines the environmental crisis as a “rapid and dramatic” change in environment conditions. He writes, “I define an Environmental Crisis as a dramatic, unexpected, and irreversible worsening of the environment leading to significant welfare losses” (Taylor 2016).

Scientists also describe the environmental crisis as a product of living in an unsustainable environment. Our environment is becoming more and more toxic because of our use of chemicals and radioactive elements; we are also producing a lot of harmful waste. As a result, the atmosphere is becoming warmer which is a threat for present and future human beings, all other living creatures, and other natural entities. A Special Report published by IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) indicates that there is an increase of global temperature of 1.5 degrees and notes:

In its decision on the adoption of the Paris Agreement, the Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at its 21st Session in Paris, France (30 November to 11 December 2015), invited the IPCC to provide a special report in 2018 on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways. (IPCC 2016)

The extinction of various species is another indication of the environmental crisis. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has assessed more than 79,800 species for the Red List, among them more than 23,000 are “threatened with extinction”. Their goal is to assess 1,60,000 species by 2020 (IUCN 2016). They also note,

‘103 extinctions [of plant and animal species] have occurred since 1800, indicating an extinction rate 50 times greater than the natural rate’ (‘Confirming’ 2000). (These findings mirror sources of evidence of such extinction.) A 1998 survey of 400 members of the American Institute of Biological Sciences indicated that 70% of the scientists polled believed that ‘the world is now in the midst of the fastest mass extinction of living things in the 4.5 billion-year history of the planet’ (Ayers 1998). Most of

these scientists attributed these losses to human activity (Warrick 1998, A4). (*The Environmental Challenges We Face* 2016)

Therefore, we can deduce that the environmental crisis, from a scientific viewpoint, is a crisis where human beings face serious challenges to being able to live healthy and comfortable lives. It also means an increase in severe untreatable diseases, animals becoming vulnerable and extinct and a changing ecosystem due to toxic components. As a result, global warming and climate change are visible outcomes of environmental crisis.

Environmental Crisis: Philosophical Viewpoints

Philosophers understand the environmental crisis as a problematic relationship between humans and nature. It is a crisis where human beings have failed to establish a harmonious relationship with the environment. The traditional approach of human–nature relationships indicates that there is a hierarchy among the creations, and it is one where human beings are positioned just after the angels. The Creator has nominated human beings as His representative. So, human beings inherited the sole right of domination over nature. This attitude toward nature has made human beings more cruel. Their greedy attitudes have led them to commit violent actions towards the natural elements and, as a result, the natural balance is hampered. For this reason, the life of all living creatures, including human beings, is now under threat. Freya Mathews describes the environmental crisis within the parameters of this relationship:

they analysed these attitudes as the expression of *human chauvinism*, the groundless belief, amounting to nothing more than prejudice, that only human beings mattered, morally speaking; to the extent that anything else mattered at all, according to this attitude, it mattered only because it had some kind of utility or instrumental value for us. This assumption, which came to be known more widely as the assumption of *anthropocentrism* or human-centredness, was a premise, they argued, not only of the forestry industry, with its narrow-minded reduction of ancient forest to timber resource, but of the entire Western tradition. (2010, 1)

In brief, philosophically the environmental crisis is a crisis of values, perceptions, and beliefs. John H. Fielder states that,

The environmental crisis is forcing us to examine some of our basic assumptions about our relationship to nature. It is essential that these philosophical issues become part of the larger public debate on the

environment, so that our technical and economic options are also seen as choices that reflect certain beliefs and values in a philosophy of life. (1991, 230)

Philosophers observe the environmental crisis from a broader perspective. They do not believe that the environmental crisis is an isolated problem, which any particular initiative can solve and so, instead, they offer different types of approaches in order to overcome it. Some philosophers, for example Norton and Passmore, argue for a solution within the Western framework; this means that they believe the Western normative system is enough to address the environmental crisis and that we just need to formulate effective moral norms and implement them whenever we face a new crisis. We do not need to abandon these norms because they are based on human-centeredness. Human beings have the enormous capacity to correct themselves, as they have done for centuries throughout modern civilization. In contrast, other philosophers, like Leopold and Routley, propose that we need a completely new kind of normative theory to face the global crisis. Anthropocentrism is responsible for severe environmental problems and it cannot be a solution. Rather, we need a new set of moral standards where not only human beings but also other elements of nature, such as land, rivers, and mountains, are considered intrinsically valuable. The Western tradition does not support this value system because it holds that all elements in nature are instrumentally valuable (i.e. they are only valuable in relation to their usefulness for humans).

Environmental Crisis from a Deep Ecological Perspective

Deep ecology views the environmental catastrophe, as a crisis of ecological knowledge and erroneous worldviews. Our ecological knowledge is so limited that we believe that some elements in nature are useful and some are not. We are not aware of the full extent of humanity's enormous potential. Our self-centered behavior has narrowed our abilities. We misunderstand the notion of living a meaningful life and instead privilege artificial luxury over protecting the environment. In addition, focusing on technology has accelerated our environmental crisis. Naess reflects on the environmental crisis in the following way:

This discussion of the environmental crisis is motivated by the unrealised potential human beings have for varied experience in and of nature: the crisis contributes or could contribute to open our minds to sources of meaningful life which have largely gone unnoticed or have been

depreciated in our efforts to adapt to the urbanised, techno-industrial mega-society. (1989, 24)

Naess holds that there are several elements responsible for the environmental crisis. Some are philosophical and others are related to the uses of technology but all of them focus on the notion of “progress”. However, the concept of “progress” is not correctly constructed because as Naess argues,

Progress has in all seriousness been measured by the rate of energy consumption and the acquisition and accumulation of material objects. What seems to better the material prerequisites for ‘the good life’ is given priority without asking if life is experienced as good. (1989, 24–25)

So, we judge whether we are living a good life or not through our standard of living. A good life does not mean a high standard of living but instead it means living in an emotionally rich and sustainable way. Naess adds,

But the taste is the proof of the pudding, and more and more people in the so-called affluent societies are finding that its flavour isn’t worth the stress. ‘I am rich’ as an experience is largely, but not entirely, independent of the conventional prerequisites for the good life. (1989, 25)

Naess observes that we are currently more worried about our standard of living than our quality of life.

Our current focus on production and consumption is not correct. Reflecting on the current economic situation, Naess writes,

At present, the machine seems to require and to produce a distorted attitude to life. Within such a well-oiled system, a revision of value standards in favour of all-round experiential values, life quality rather than standard of living, must sound like a dangerous proposition. (1989, 25)

So, Naess’s claim is that the environmental crisis is a result of our faulty economy, which is grounded in misunderstood values and standards.

The Roots of Environmental Crisis as Perceived by Deep Ecology

Deep ecologists have observed some major causes of the environmental crisis. We have indicated two origins of environmental crisis: one is

philosophical and the other is the use of harmful technologies in the name of “progress” and “development”. We can also point out some additional roots of the environmental crisis according to a deep ecological perspective:

1. An incorrect focus on production and consumption due to damaging ideologies, practices, and values
2. A lack of appropriate and sufficient ecological knowledge
3. Separation from nature
4. The perception that nature is a resource for human beings

Naess concludes that the environmental crisis is an “ecocatastrophe” and argues that,

The crisis of life conditions on Earth could help us choose a new path with new criteria for progress, efficiency, and rational action. This positive aspect of our situation has inspired Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle. The environmental crisis could inspire a new renaissance; new social forms for co-existence together with a high level of culturally integrated technology, economic progress (with less interference), and a less restricted experience of life. (Naess 1989, 26)

So, the root cause of the environmental crisis, as argued by deep ecologists, is highly technology-based self-centered lifestyles. Our ignorance about ecology has created more damage in the ecosphere. Scientists often reflect on unusual natural calamities by saying “we do not know”. Therefore, deep ecologists hold that ecological wisdom is necessary in all aspects of life. Our lifestyle has had a serious impact on the environment and if we do not have sufficient ecological wisdom, then it is highly probable that we will behave arrogantly towards the environment. We need progress and economic development, but this progress and development must be consistent with environmental sustainability. Our values may not be merely anthropocentric, but we must also consider other elements of nature as intrinsically valuable. There is no restriction on using natural elements for human purposes, if they are fulfilling basic needs. Human beings destroy the environment mainly to satisfy their greed for unnecessary consumption.

Lack of ecological wisdom creates obstacles that prevent humans from integrating with nature. Nature should not be controlled but, instead, enjoyed as it is. Science narrowly focuses on one particular aspect of nature, but nature should be understood on a much broader scale. Nature is not just the means of living as it is inspiring and could help human beings realize their duties and obligations towards other entities. Ecology opens

new horizons of knowledge for environmental wisdom. The more we identify with nature, the more we can realize the position of human beings within nature. Naess notes,

The study of ecosystems makes us conscious of our ignorance. Faced with experts who, after calling attention to a critical situation, emphasise their lack of knowledge and suggest research programmes which may diminish this lack of knowledge. (1989, 27)

In brief, deep ecology maintains that the root of our environmental crisis is philosophical. Our interactions with nature that shape our basic metaphysics regarding the human–nature relation is erroneous; the world view that we construct currently as a standard of living is also incorrect. Deep ecology suggests that our goal should be a rich life that is harmonious with other life forms.

Ecological Wisdom and Ecological Ignorance

Ecological wisdom helps us to live a sustainable life. Achieving ecological wisdom should be the goal of all environmental studies. Usually, when we go on vacation to natural resorts our goal is to enjoy natural beauty. However, deep ecologists suggest that we should go to attain ecological wisdom. School children and environmental workers must identify with nature in order to overcome the ecological crisis. Identifying with nature will enable them to understand the ecological balance. If the ecological balance is disrupted, the whole community will face a catastrophe.

Ecological ignorance may result in serious damage to the environment. Ecological ignorance shows our limitations in perceiving diverse and rich natural entities. We could ignore the lower plants or species but Naess declares that,

So-called simple, lower, or primitive species of plants and animals contribute essentially to the richness and diversity of life. They have value in themselves and are not merely steps toward the so-called higher or rational life forms. (1989, 29)

So, those who create a demarcation between human/other life forms, and plants/other natural entities are ecologically ignorant because the whole universe is linked together. In Naess's words, it is a "total field-image".

Conclusion

Deep ecologists call for a total change in our lifestyles and our narrow conception of community. There is no doubt that we are facing an environmental crisis because environmental catastrophic events are happening throughout the globe. These include climate change, global warming, rising sea levels, flood, drought, deforestation, desertification, acid rain, and the extinction of various species. Scientists view the environmental crisis as a change in the ecosystem. They have shown us that environmental problems are caused by physical and chemical changes in environmental elements. To overcome these problems, they suggest reducing carbon emissions.

However, individual initiatives may not be enough to overcome the current situation. Environmental philosophers point out that the problem lies in our defective human–nature relationship. Our traditional moral theories hold that only human beings are intrinsically valuable, while all other creations are for the use of human beings, which means that they are instrumentally valuable. If we want to overcome the ecological crisis, we should follow well-recognized moral norms towards other natural entities.

Deep ecologists find that this approach is inaccurate. We need a new worldview, which holds that other elements in nature are also intrinsically valuable. Since other elements in nature help to maintain the environmental balance, they should have equal value to human beings. Increasing ecological consciousness is the only solution to correct our inappropriate perceptions. Therefore, deep ecologists suggest that we should identify with nature and gain ecological wisdom to overcome the ecological crisis. The more we identify with nature, the more wisdom we will gain. This wisdom will help us to construct a correct worldview and appropriate human–nature relationship.

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CHAPTER TWO

SELF-REALIZATION: THE BASIC NORM OF DEEP ECOLOGY¹

This chapter considers some foundations of self-realization and morality in order to justify Arne Naess's claim that "Self-realization is morally neutral". Self-realization, the ultimate goal of Naess's ecosophy, is the complete and final realization of the maxim "everything is interrelated". This norm seems to be based on two basic principles: the reduction of ego and the creation of integrity between human and non-human worlds. This chapter argues that the former is an extension of Plato's idea of self-development, or self-mastery, while the latter is implicit in Aristotle's holism. It is important to note that self-realization is morally neutral only if the term "moral" is considered in the Kantian sense. However, Naess reluctantly distinguishes between ethics and morality, which makes his approach less credible. The chapter concludes that Aristotle's notion of *eudaimonia* supports Self-realization by qualifying it as a virtue.

Introduction

Deep ecology, as an environmental movement, emphasizes Self-realization, ecological wisdom, and the asking of profound questions. Instead of dominating moral norms, such as the Categorical Imperative, Self-realization is the essence of deep ecology. Arne Naess, the pioneer of this movement, believes that a radical change in our present ideology, attitudes, and values towards the environment can solve the environmental crisis. Environmental philosophers and ethicists also suggest this change and recommend various sets of rules but, in contradiction with their stances, Naess argues for "no moralizing" because he thinks that all we need is "Self-realization".

¹ Previously published as "On Self-Realization—The Ultimate Norm of Arne Naess's Ecosophy T" *SYMPOSION: Theoretical and Applied Inquiries in Philosophy and Social Sciences* 3, no. 2 (2016): 219–235.

Naess uses the term “Self-realization” in a comprehensive sense. His procedure first distinguishes between the two selves: Self (with a capital S) meaning the Indian *atman*, and self (with a small s) meaning the individual self. The individual self should achieve the universal Self via diminishing the ego or through the “narrow self”; in other words, through realizing the maxim “everything is interrelated”. Naess argues that once the individual attains Self-realization, her behavior “naturally” and “joyfully” follows the norms of environmental ethics. Some important questions then arise: is Self-realization a moral term? Or is it a virtue to which the self needs to become accustomed?

Thus, two basic principles—the diminishing of ego and the integrity between the human and the non-human world—constitute Naess’s ultimate norm of Self-realization. By the diminishing of ego, he means the gradual reduction of our hedonistic attitudes and the curtailment of our Western isolated egos. The integrity principle says that everything in this biosphere is internally connected, as all organisms are parts of an integrated whole. That is, if we harm any elements in nature, then eventually we will harm ourselves. I argue that the first principle is an extension of Plato’s self-development, or self-mastery, while the second is an extension of Aristotle’s biocentric holism.

The chapter starts with an explanation of the term Self-realization. It then focuses on Plato and Aristotle’s views. After briefly reviewing Gandhi’s non-violence theory and Buddhism, I will support Naess’s claim that Self-realization is a morally neutral phenomenon. At the end, I will show that although Self-realization is, in essence, non-moral, Aristotle’s notion of *eudaimonia* provides enough ground for it to qualify as a virtue.

Self-realization as the Ultimate Norm of Ecosophy T

Self-realization is the norm that connects all life forms through the ultimate principle that “life is fundamentally one”. David Rothenberg has identified three main features of this norm: firstly, Self-realization does not mean self-centeredness because the individual self cannot be isolated from or dissolved into the greater Self. Secondly, Self-realization is a process of expanding oneself to realize that she is a part of nature and others’ interest should be her own interests. Finally, since Self-realization is an active condition, as it is a process or a way of life, nobody can ever reach Self-realization. Like *Nirvana* in Buddhism, Self-realization is unreachable. Self-realization provides us a direction to move towards the Self (Rothenberg 1986, 9).

But what does the Self exactly mean in Naess's ecosophy? What are its special characteristics? In one sense, the Self includes all life forms in the world. That is, it is the symbol of organic oneness. Naess writes, "the Self in question is a symbol of identification with an absolute maximum range of beings" (quoted in Fox 1990, 99). He also adds, "[t]his large comprehensive Self (with a capital 'S') embraces all the life forms on the planet" (Naess 1986, 80). However, I think these words do not present his whole idea of the Self. The Self can also be seen as an extended manifestation of the self or, in other words, the universal Self is the mature form of the narrow self.

The Self represents unselfishness, totality, and is beyond narrowness. It is unselfish in the sense that it considers the potentiality and the life of other non-human beings. Narrow human dominance dissolves into the Self. So, the Self, in another sense, refers to the wider, broadened, matured, refined, examined, and developed self. If we accept both these characteristics, Self-realization then denotes the realization of the "organic wholeness" as well as some sort of "rectification" of our selves.

As I have just mentioned, Self-realization conceives a view of totality that is the ultimate goal of life. To reach this goal one has to go through several stages:

- T0-self-realisation
 - T1-ego-realisation
 - T2-self-realisation (with lower case s)
 - T3-Self-realisation (with capital S)
- (Naess 1989, 84–85)

The last stage (T3) should be the ultimate goal. In the Western philosophical tradition, we find only T0, which Naess calls isolated or egoistic. However, T3 is similar to the "Universal Self" or to the "Absolute" in this tradition. Now, how can we reach T3 from T0? In other words, do we need any moral norm to reach T3? According to Naess, we need "inclination" rather than "morality" to get T3, which involves a joyful connection with nature (1989, 86).

The norm of Self-realization plays a central role in distinguishing between "shallow" and "deep" ecology. In the shallow ecology movement, Self-realization seems less important because the movement only aims to fight against pollution and protect human beings. By contrast, in deep ecology, Self-realization is extremely crucial. Deep ecology considers all organisms, plants, and so forth, as a "total-field image". So, deep ecology dissolves the "man-in-environment" concept and establishes a more symbiotic relationship; a relationship which is intrinsically valuable and

based on an enlightened principle, which is “the equal right to live and blossom” (Naess 1973, 152).

Thus, Naess’s Self-realization dismisses any hierarchical chain among human beings, animals, and plants. It favors the principle of integrity in order to draw a normative conclusion. Self-realization, therefore, is neither a purely ecological nor a logical conception. It is an ecosophy of equilibrium and harmony.

By means of this norm, Naess argues against the “survival for the fittest” theory. As Darwin’s theory undermines co-existence and co-operational relations in the biosphere and advocates an “either you or me” sentiment, Naess rejects it. As an alternative to the evolutionary thesis, Naess’s maxim is “live and let live” in a class-free society in the whole ecosphere. He writes that “[b]y identifying with greater wholes, we partake in the creation and maintenance of this whole” (Naess 1989, 173).

So, the question is, how does the process of identification stem from the notion of “live and let live”? Naess mentions that human beings cannot help animals, plants, other species, and even landscapes, because we can only *identify* ourselves with them. Identification is a situation that “elicits intense empathy” (Naess 1986, 227). One example of identification is that once Naess saw a dying flea jump into acid. Although he was not able to save the flea from dying, he felt its suffering deeply. Naess says, “[n]aturally, what I felt was a painful sense of compassion and empathy” (1986, 227). Hence, psychologically, Naess realized the similar pain of death and felt deep compassion and empathy by identifying with the flea. Identification means that one is not *alienated* from others.

According to Naess, self-love is a pre-condition for identification. He understands self-love not in an egoistic sense, but rather in the deep and wide sense, that promotes others’ interest. The being’s interest, therefore, makes a bridge to reach Self-realization from self-love. Inspired by Spinoza and William James, Naess maintains that human beings are interested in preserving their existence. However, this interest is basically the realization of their “inherent potentialities”. Naess believes that other animals and plants have the same interests and that only through identification we can realize them (1986, 229). So, existence appears as a necessary condition rather than a sufficient condition for Self-realization.

Another point is that the self develops into the *ecological Self* when human beings realize their own self-interests and have genuine self-love. The ecological Self feels a strong bond with the natural setting around her. She has a deep identification with it and finds herself a part of it. Naess expresses the feelings of the ecological Self in the following ways: “[m]y relation to this place is part of myself”, and “[i]f this place is destroyed

something in me is destroyed” (1986, 231). Naess seems to say that, unlike the Western philosophical trend, the self is not merely something that exists inside the body and has consciousness as it has a major role in the identification and the realization of our relationship with nature. It contributes significantly to our understanding of how we should live, and how we should treat ourselves as self-interested and self-loving beings.

Clearly, Self-realization inspires us to think beyond humanity. That is, we should realize our intimacy with the non-human world. Deep ecologists, Bill Devall and George Sessions, reveal its meaning in the maxim “no one is saved until we are all saved”. Here, the word “one” refers to each and every elements of the ecosphere that contributes to its existence, such as bears, mountains, rivers, and even the microscopic lives in the soil (Devall and Sessions 1985, 222).

In the next two successive sections, I argue that the foundation of the Self-realization norm can be found in Plato’s view of self-development and in Aristotle’s holism.

Plato’s View of Self-development

Plato developed Socrates’ idea of “know thyself” in his view of self-development. Plato did not take “Self-realization” as the ultimate norm and “self” was the central moral source in his thinking. From this perspective, Plato’s view of self-development could be the beginning of the norm of Self-realization. According to Socrates, “the unexamined life is not worth living” (Des Jardins 1997, 212). The inner message of this statement is that the good life must involve a process of self-understanding, self-examination, self-interpretation, and so forth; this is also the aim of Self-realization.

In the *Republic*, Plato’s moral thinking is directed in a similar way because, he believes that, “[w]e are good when reason rules, and bad when we are dominated by our desires” (Taylor 1989, 115). That is, the good man is dominated by reason instead of desires. Arne Naess says that “[t]o identify Self-realization with ego-trips manifests a vast underestimation of the human self” (1986, 234). Devall and Sessions illustrate this idea in the following manner: “Self-realization goes beyond the modern Western *self* which is defined as an isolated ego striving primarily for hedonistic gratification or for a narrow sense of individual salvation in this life or the next” (1985, 222).

Both Plato and Naess argue against allowing our narrow egos or hedonistic desires to dominate. They hold that our reason should dominate our soul and our thoughts, instead of those anthropocentric desires which

direct human beings to fulfill their needs and wants by any means. Someone could argue here that Plato is more concerned with “self-control”, while Naess is focused on the “diminishing of ego”. Even though to some extent it is acceptable, their ultimate goals both seem to show that egoistic desire should not control a good human being. Morally good human beings have the natural capacity to control or to rectify themselves.

Plato’s notion of self-development harmonizes three concepts: unity, calm, and self-possession, which Taylor calls “self-mastery”. To be ruled by reason it is necessary to have the correct understanding or ordering. According to Plato, correct ordering establishes “priorities among our different appetites and activities, distinguishes between necessary and unnecessary desires” (Taylor 1989, 121). Nevertheless, without self-examination the capacity for correct understanding of appetites, activities, and desires is not possible. As Naess says, without developing capacities, the ultimate goal of Self-realization is not achievable (1986, 233). Broadly, these capacities may include identifying with the non-human world.

Beyond this similarity, there are a number of methodological differences between Plato and Naess. Plato did not consider the ‘Self’ in his philosophy as an organic wholeness or an organic oneness. Nor did he take it as an expanded pattern of the self. Plato’s self seems centered on morality, particularly when he distinguishes between the higher part and the lower part of the human soul. The dominance of the higher part implies that we should be ruled by reason. Naess, by contrast, believes that inclination rather than morals can change our behavior.

Rationality is a key feature of Platonic philosophy. Plato divides our souls into three aspects based on our mental states and activities. The appetitive part, the spirited part, and the rational part create a harmony, or balance, between our desires and will. However, only the rational part has the ability to know what is best for the individual. Rational desire does not rely on the strength of desires. Reason is thus a condition for self-mastery or self-possession. Naess believes that to act always by reason, or by duty, is a “painful toil”. A process of identification and joy can help us end this painful situation. The concept of identification is completely absent in Plato’s thought.

Indeed, with regard to these differences, I believe Plato’s metaphysics and ethics exhibit a way of governing human beings’ behavior that relies on reason, but not necessarily on the moral principles that Kant focuses on. Plato’s vision was to create craftsmen, who can lead their lives by art, beauty, and knowledge, rather than Kantian moral agents. As Carone rightly mentions, “craftsmen of goodness in their own lives” (2005, 123). This noble idea creates a closer link with Naess’s thought.

In the great Allegory of the Cave, Plato argues that through education we can move from “illusion to wisdom.” Illusion prevents us from attaining the right desires and true happiness, while wisdom is the achievement of real knowledge and correct reason, which allows us to live a good life. Plato says that this improvement is a turn from “darkness to brightness”. Taylor’s response to this analogy reflects the motto of “Self-realization”. He writes, “[f]or Plato the key issue is what the soul is directed towards...the possible directions of our awareness and desire” (Taylor 1989, 123–124). Similarly, Naess’s norm of Self-realization creates an “awareness” of identification, the diminishment of ego, holistic and harmonious living, joyful co-existence, and the broadening of self to the Self.

Thus, we can say that Plato’s view of self-development primarily focuses on self-awareness. This awareness corrects our desire, guides our reason, and clarifies our vision of the good life. As a whole, his account centers on how moral development can be achieved through the rectification of the soul. We have already discussed that Naess’s Self-realization is a process of enlightened self-interest, and of recognizing the potentiality of all elements in the ecosphere. Therefore, although Plato did not use the term “Self-realization”, the norm seems implicit in his view of self-development.

Aristotle on Biocentric Holism

Aristotle blends ethics and biology, and believes that biology should be the essential part of ethics (Des Jardins 1997, 20). Deep ecologist Arne Naess also presents a similar view by mixing ecology and ethics as an alternative to solve the environmental crisis. It is, therefore, not surprising that Naess and Aristotle both share the same integrity principle in order to construct a holistic approach to nature. The integrity principle, as outlined by Aldo Leopold, states that “[a] thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (quoted in Des Jardins 1997, 176). Thus, integrity also has a moral dimension. Westra develops a more precise version of integrity in an environmental context. She writes that, “the ‘principle of integrity’ is an imperative which must be obeyed *before* other human moral considerations are taken into account. Just as...the *basis* for all life is a holistic value” (Westra 1994, 6). So, roughly, the principle of integrity is the (moral) basis of biocentric holism. Now, we have to show how Aristotle’s view conceives of this principle.

Aristotle's works, *Metaphysics*, *Physics*, *De Anima*, and *Nicomachean Ethics*, all reflect on the principle of integrity. All natural objects, according to Aristotle, can be divided into two classes: living and non-living. The living things comprise the "principle of life itself" or "psyche" meaning "soul" (Des Jardins 1997, 21). However, movable things operate using "qualitative potentials", while "locomotive natures" head towards a "mature state" (*akme*). In practice, he uses *eidōs* (species or form) as a unified norm for biology, ethics, and metaphysics (Westra 1994, 135).

Aristotle's view of natural integrity is teleological because the aim of all living things is to achieve *telos* (purpose or function). As Westra argues, this activity involves some sort of "self-maintenance". Like *telos*, self-maintenance then also demonstrates a positive value. Therefore, she claims that the self-maintenance capacity of an organic ecosystem should be considered an "indisputable value" (Westra 1994, 135).

Lennox points out similar findings and writes: "[Aristotle] claims to be arguing for the extension of teleology to nature, not, or not merely, to plants and animals. And yet the examples he uses to illustrate the teleology of nature are all organic" (Lennox 2006, 294). Aristotle, therefore, includes human beings, plants, and animals as integrated parts of an organic system. Biocentric holism also appears in his book *Progression of Animals*: "nature never produces in vain, but always produces *the best among the possibilities for the being of each kind of animal*" (quoted in Lennox 1985, 72).

However, Aristotle differs from Naess in some important points. Firstly, Aristotle holds a teleological view of nature, in that all entities in the natural world have an instrumental value as, according to Aristotle, they are resources for human beings but, at the same time, they have an intrinsic value because their end is to attain excellence. For example, a tree has an instrumental value as human beings may use it for several purposes, but the tree is functioning well and so, in this sense, the tree has an intrinsic value. By contrast, Naess holds that all natural elements are intrinsically valuable; they are valuable for themselves. Thus, their values do not depend on their usefulness. Secondly, unlike Naess, Aristotle holds that only human beings have moral status, which is a strong anthropocentric view towards nature. He writes, "plants exist for the sake of animals...all other animals exist for the sake of man" (quoted in Des Jardins 1997, 91). Since Aristotle believes that only human beings can possess *psyche* or soul, which is the prime criterion of morality, only they can claim moral standing. Thirdly, as human beings possess the top position in the hierarchy, their interests and needs are very important for Aristotle. In contrast, Naess aims to eliminate such hierarchy and argues