

456 Deep Ecology

Taylor, Bron. "Resacralizing Earth: Pagan Environmentalism and the Restoration of Turtle Island." In *American Sacred Space*. David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, 97–151.

See also: Abbey, Edward; Black Mesa; Church of Euthanasia; Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front; Green Death Movement; Jeffers, John Robinson; Radical Environmentalism.

Deep Ecology

Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (b. 1912) coined the term "Deep Ecology" in 1972 to express the idea that nature has intrinsic value, namely, value apart from its usefulness to human beings, and that all life forms should be allowed to flourish and fulfill their evolutionary destinies. Naess invented the rubric to contrast such views with what he considered to be "shallow" environmentalism, namely, environmental concern rooted only in concern for humans. The term has since come to signify both its advocates' deeply felt spiritual connections to the Earth's living systems and ethical obligations to protect them, as well as the global environmental movement that bears its name. Moreover, some deep ecologists posit close connections between certain streams in world religions and deep ecology.

Naess and most deep ecologists, however, trace their perspective to personal experiences of connection to and wholeness in wild nature, experiences which are the ground of their intuitive, affective perception of the sacredness and interconnection of all life. Those who have experienced such a transformation of consciousness (experiencing what is sometimes called one's "ecological self" in these movements) view the self not as separate from and superior to all else, but rather as a small part of the entire cosmos. From such experience flows the conclusion that all life and even ecosystems themselves have inherent or intrinsic value – that is, value independently of whether they are useful to humans.

Although Naess coined the term, many deep ecologists credit the American ecologist Aldo Leopold with succinctly expressing such a deep ecological worldview in his now famous "Land Ethic" essay, which was published posthumously in *A Sand County Almanac* in 1948. Leopold argued that humans ought to act only in ways designed to protect the long-term flourishing of all ecosystems and each of their constituent parts.

Many deep ecologists call their perspective alternatively "ecocentrism" or "biocentrism" (to convey, respectively, an ecosystem-centered or life-centered value system). As importantly, they believe humans have so degraded the biosphere that its life-sustaining systems are breaking down. They trace this tragic situation to anthro-

pocentrism (human-centeredness), which values nature exclusively in terms of its usefulness to humans. Anthropocentrism, in turn, is viewed as grounded in Western religion and philosophy, which many deep ecologists believe must be rejected (or a deep ecological transformation of consciousness within them must occur) if humans are to learn to live sustainably on the Earth.

Thus, many deep ecologists believe that only by "resacralizing" our perceptions of the natural world can we put ecosystems above narrow human interests and learn to live harmoniously with the natural world, thereby averting ecological catastrophe. It is a common perception within the deep ecology movement that the religions of indigenous cultures, the world's remnant and newly revitalized or invented pagan religions, and religions originating in Asia (especially Daoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism) provide superior grounds for ecological ethics, and greater ecological wisdom, than do Occidental religions. Theologians such as Matthew Fox and Thomas Berry, however, have shown that Western religions such as Christianity may be interpreted in ways largely compatible with the deep ecology movement.

Although Naess coined the umbrella term, which is now a catchphrase for most non-anthropocentric environmental ethics, a number of Americans were also criticizing anthropocentrism and laying the foundation for the movement's ideas at about the same time as Naess was coining the term. One crucial event early in deep ecology's evolution was the 1974 "Rights of Non-Human Nature" conference held at a college in Claremont, California. Inspired by Christopher Stone's influential 1972 law article (and subsequent book) *Should Trees Have Standing? – Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects*, the conference drew many of those who would become the intellectual architects of deep ecology. These included George Sessions who, like Naess, drew on Spinoza's pantheism, later co-authoring *Deep Ecology* with Bill Devall; Gary Snyder, whose remarkable, Pulitzer prize-winning *Turtle Island* proclaimed the value of place-based spiritualities, indigenous cultures, and animistic perceptions, ideas that would become central within deep ecology subcultures; and the late Paul Shepard (d. 1996), who in *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game*, and subsequent works such as *Nature and Madness* and the posthumously published *Coming Back to the Pleistocene*, argued that foraging societies were ecologically superior to and emotionally healthier than agricultural societies. Shepard and Snyder especially provided a cosmogony that explained humanity's fall from a pristine, natural paradise. Also extremely influential was Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*, which viewed the desert as a sacred place uniquely able to evoke in people a proper, non-anthropocentric understanding of the value of nature. By the early 1970s the above figures put in place the intellectual foundations of deep ecology.

Deep Ecology Platform

Formulated by Arne Naess and George Sessions in April 1984, during a camping trip in Death Valley, California, the Deep Ecology Platform (DEP) seeks to be agreeable to environmentalists from many different persuasions. Individuals may derive the DEP from their own ultimate premises and ecosophies (a term Naess coined for “ecological philosophy”), Buddhism, Christianity, Spinozism, or ecofeminism, or they may arrive at the DEP as a result of deep questioning that moves from particular situations toward more general norms and consequences. The DEP has been criticized, for example, by those who fear that its fourth plank, regarding population reduction, could be used to justify draconian birth-control methods. In general, however, the DEP has won assent from many environmentalists.

The eight-point platform may be summarized in this way:

1. Human and nonhuman life alike have inherent value.
2. Richness and diversity of life contribute to realizing these values, and are themselves valuable.
3. Humans have no right to reduce richness or diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
4. Human life can flourish with a substantial reduction in human population, which is needed for the flourishing of nonhuman life.
5. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is already excessive and is worsening.
6. Economic, technological, and ideological policies must be changed, in a way that leads to states of affairs deeply different from the present.
7. The ideological change must involve appreciating the inherent value of all life, rather than continually increasing the material living standard.
8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation to implement the necessary changes.

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A corresponding movement soon followed and grew rapidly, greatly influencing grassroots environmentalism, especially in Europe, North America, and Australia. Shortly after forming in 1980, for example, leaders of the politically radical Earth First! movement (the exclamation point is part of its name) learned about Deep Ecology, and immediately embraced it as their own spiritual philosophy. Meanwhile, the green lifestyle-focused movement known as bioregionalism also began to embody a deep ecology worldview. Given their natural affinities it was not long before bioregionalism became the prevailing social philosophy among deep ecologists.

As a philosophy and as a movement, deep ecology spread in many ways. During the 1980s and early 1990s, for example, Bill Devall and George Sessions published their influential book, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*; Warwick Fox in *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology* linked deep ecology with transpersonal psychology, thereby furthering the development of what is now called ecopsychology; David Rothenberg translated and edited Arne Naess's important work, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*; and Michael E. Zimmerman interpreted Martin Heidegger as a forerunner of deep ecology, thus helping to spark a trend of calling upon contemporary European thinkers for insight into environmental issues. Many deep ecologists have complained, however, that the postmodern thinking imported from Europe has undermined the status of “nature,” defined by deep ecologists as a whole that includes but exists independently of humankind.

Radical environmentalist activists, including the American co-founder of Earth First!, Dave Foreman, and the Australian co-founder of the Rainforest Information Centre, John Seed, beginning in the early 1980s, con-

ducted “road shows” to transform consciousness and promote environmental action. Such events usually involve speeches and music designed to evoke or reinforce peoples’ felt connections to nature, and inspires action. Often, they also include photographic presentations contrasting intact and revered ecosystems with degraded and defiled lands.

Some activists have designed ritual processes to further deepen participants’ spiritual connections to nature and political commitment to defend it. Joanna Macy and a number of others, including John Seed, for example, developed a ritual process known as the Council of All Beings, which endeavors to get activists to see the world from the perspective of nonhuman entities. Since the early 1980s, traveling widely around the world, Seed has labored especially hard spreading deep ecology through this and other newly invented ritual processes. The movement has also been disseminated through the writings of its architects (often reaching college students in environmental studies courses); through journalists reporting on deep ecology-inspired environmental protests and direct action resistance; and through the work of novelists, poets, musicians, and other artists, who promote in their work deep ecological perceptions. Recent expressions in ecotourism can be seen, for example, in the “Deep Ecology Elephant Project,” which includes tours in both Asia and Africa, and suggest that elephants and other wildlife have much to teach their human kin.

Deep Ecology has been criticized by people representing social ecology, socialist ecology, liberal democracy, and ecofeminism. Murray Bookchin, architect of the anarchistic green social philosophy known as Social Ecology, engaged in sometimes vituperative attacks on

deep ecology and its activist vanguard, Earth First!, for being intellectually incoherent, ignorant of socio-economic factors in environmental problems, and given to mysticism and misanthropy. Bookchin harshly criticized Earth First! co-founder Dave Foreman for suggesting that starvation was a solution to human overpopulation and environmental deterioration. Later, however, Bookchin and Foreman engaged in a more constructive dialogue. Meanwhile, socialist ecologists maintain that deep ecology overemphasizes cultural factors (world-views, religion, philosophy) in diagnosing the roots of, and solutions to, environmental problems, thereby minimizing the roles played by the social, political, and economic factors inherent in global capitalism.

Liberal democrats such as the French scholar Luc Ferry (1995) maintain that deep ecology is incapable of providing guidance in moral decision making. Insofar as deep ecology fails adequately to recognize that human life has more value than other life forms, he argues, it promotes "ecofascism," namely the sacrifice of individual humans for the benefit of the ecological whole, what Leopold termed "the land." (Ecofascism in its most extreme form links the racial purity of a people to the well-being of the nation's land; calls for the removal or killing of non-native peoples; and may also justify profound individual and collective sacrifice of its own people for the health of the natural environment.) Many environmental philosophers have defended Leopold's land ethic, and by extension, deep ecology, against such charges, most notably one of the pioneers of contemporary environmental philosophy, J. Baird Callicott.

Although some ecofeminists indicate sympathy with deep ecology's basic goal, namely, protecting natural phenomena from human destruction, others have sharply criticized deep ecology. Male, white, and middle-class deep ecologists, Ariel Salleh maintains, ignore how patriarchal beliefs, attitudes, practices, and institutions help to generate environmental problems. Val Plumwood and Jim Cheney criticize deep ecology's idea of expanding the self so as to include and thus to have a basis for protecting nonhuman phenomena. This "ecological self" allegedly constitutes a totalizing view that obliterates legitimate distinctions between self and other. Moreover, Plumwood argues, deep ecology unwisely follows the rationalist tradition in basing moral decisions on "impartial identification," a practice that does not allow for the highly particular attachments that often motivate environmentalists and indigenous people alike to care for local places.

Warwick Fox has replied that impartial and wider identification does not cancel out particular or personal attachments, but instead, puts them in the context of more encompassing concerns that are otherwise ignored, as when for example concern for one's family blinds one to concerns about concerns of the community. Fox adds that deep ecology criticizes the ideology – anthropocentrism –

that has always been used to by social agents to legitimate oppression of groups regarded as sub- or nonhuman. While modern liberation movements have sought to include more and more people into the class of full humans, such movements have typically not criticized anthropocentrism as such. Even a fully egalitarian society, in other words, could continue to use anthropocentrism to justify exploiting the nonhuman realm.

In response to the claim that deep ecology is, or threatens to be, a totalizing worldview that excludes alternatives and that – ironically – threatens cultural diversity, Arne Naess responds that, to the contrary, deep ecology is constituted by multiple perspectives or "ecosophies" (ecological philosophies) and is compatible with a wide range of religious perspectives and philosophical orientations.

Another critic, best-selling author Ken Wilber, argues that by portraying humankind as merely one strand in the web of life, deep ecology adheres to a one-dimensional, or "flatland" metaphysics (1995). Paradoxically, by asserting that material nature constitutes the whole of which humans are but a part, deep ecologists agree in important respects with modern naturalism, according to which humankind is a clever animal capable of and justified in dominating other life forms in the struggle for survival and power. According to Wilber, a "deeper" ecology would discern that the cosmos is hierarchically ordered in terms of complexity, and that respect and compassion are due all phenomena because they are manifestations of the divine.

In the last analysis, for Naess, it is personal experiences of a profound connection with nature and related perceptions of nature's inherent worth or sacredness, which give rise to deep ecological commitments. Naess believes such commitments may be derived from a wide variety of ultimate premises, religious and philosophical, so as to form a particular ecosophy. Ecosophies that identify themselves as part of the Deep Ecology Movement are consistent with the eight-point, Deep Ecology Platform, which Naess developed with George Sessions in 1984.

Although controversial and contested, both internally and among its proponents and its critics, deep ecology is an increasingly influential green spirituality and ethics that is universally recognized in environmentalist enclaves, and increasingly outside of such subcultures, as a radical movement challenging the conventional, usually anthropocentric ways humans deal with the natural world. Its influence in environmental philosophy has been profound, for even those articulating alternative environmental ethics are compelled to respond to its insistence that nature has intrinsic and even sacred value, and its challenge to anthropocentrism.

Its greatest influence, however, may be through the diverse forms of environmental activism that it inspires, action that increasingly shapes world environmental politics. Not only is deep ecology the prevailing spirituality of bioregionalism and radical environmentalism; it also

undergirds the International Forum on Globalization and the Ruckus Society, two organizations playing key roles in the anti-globalization protests that erupted in 1999. Both of these groups are generously funded by the San Francisco-based Foundation for Deep Ecology, and other foundations, which share deep ecological perceptions.

Such developments reflect a growing impulse toward institutionalization, which is designed to promote deep ecology and intensify environmental action. There are now Institutes for Deep Ecology in London, England and Occidental, California, a Sierra Nevada Deep Ecology Institute in Nevada City, California, and dozens of other organizations in the United States, Oceania, and Europe, which provide ritual-infused experiences in deep ecology and training for environmental activists. It is not, however, the movement's institutions, but instead the participants' love for the living Earth, along with their widespread apocalypticism (their conviction that the world as we know it is imperiled or doomed), that give the movement its urgent passion to promote earthen spirituality, sustainable living, and environmental activism.

Bron Taylor
Michael Zimmerman

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- See also: Abbey, Edward; Bioregionalism; Ecopsychology; Ecosophy T; Environmental Ethics; Naess, Arne; Radical Environmentalism; Seed, John; Shepard, Paul; Snyder, Gary; Wilber, Ken.

Deep Ecology, Institute for

If religion is "that dimension of human experience engaged with sacred norms [and] ultimate concerns, as David Chidester (1987: 4) has argued, then the Institute for Deep Ecology (IDE) can be viewed as a religious movement that reveres the Earth and promotes environmental activism in its defense. The Institute's website states that deep ecology is "a philosophy based on our sacred relationship with Earth and all beings; an international movement for a viable future; a path for self-realization; (and) a compass for daily action." Without specifically defining what is meant by "sacred," the site indicates that it seeks to "honor spirit" by acknowledging that the relationship between humankind and the natural world is a matter of ultimate concern and that to speak of the interdependence of all beings in the natural world is to engage in a description of ultimate reality.

Such understandings undergird the organization's mission to promote "well-being of the whole web of life." In 2002 the Institute's website stated that it does this through

ecological values and actions. At our core is a recognition of and reverence for the interdependence and inherent value of all life. To nourish these values in ourselves and the world, we provide opportunities for inquiry and practice through workshops, publications, and support networks. We seek to encourage and empower people to do good work in their home communities.

These intentions lead to actions, some of which have a marked ritual nature (such as the Council of All Beings), and are designed to foster awareness of the interconnectedness of all things, and to derive promote strategic environmental action.

The institute was initially co-founded in 1992 by Fran and Joanna Macy, in close association with Bill Devall, Stephanie Kaza, Elias Amidon, Elizabeth Roberts and others, and is situated in Boulder, Colorado. A 1993 brochure advertising its first Summer School provided the following description:

The Institute for Deep Ecology Education . . . sponsors regional and national trainings, consults on deep ecology curriculum and programs, and works to build coalitions among educators, activists, and others involved in this work. Its goal is to bring the deep ecology perspective to the environmental debates of our time.

By 1996 the organization had moved to Occidental, California, shortening its name to the Institute for Deep Ecology. In its Spring 1998 newsletter, the Institute's description stated:

The Institute for Deep Ecology (IDE) advances a world view based upon humanity's fundamental interdependence with all life forms – a philosophy commonly known as deep ecology. IDE seeks to heal the contemporary alienation from self, community, and the earth by encouraging a fundamental shift in the way we experience nature and respond to the environmental crisis.

The Institute provides transformative, action-oriented educational resources to a diverse constituency. In particular, IDE hosts trainings that bring community organizers, educators, psychotherapists, clergy, and others together with a large, multifaceted faculty of prominent environmentalists.

This second description reflects a shift toward experiential work. In addition, certain therapeutic claims are made concerning the work of the Institute ("to heal the contemporary alienation from self, community, and the Earth . . ."). In these shifts, it is possible to detect the influence of ecopsychology, and also, a more explicit articulation of the spirituality common within many deep ecological groups around the world.

For the first several years, the Institute sponsored workshops and trainings in deep ecology. Many of the trainings featured various teachers of deep ecology or environmental activists who ascribed to the principles of deep ecology. In the late 1990s, the Institute went through a self-evaluation process that resulted in a shift from small, workshop-styled trainings to larger conferences