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We are proud to begin our fourth year of publication with an article by the well-known Norwegian ecosopher, Arne Naess. It was Naess that introduced the contemporary world--and us--to the term "ecosophy" which serves as a focus for all of our endeavors. Naess has also been crucial in the development of the deep ecological movement and its philosophical articulation. In his own lifestyle, Naess bears witness to the values of simplicity in means but richness in ends.

Though Naess, in this article, addresses concerns also found among environmental and animal rights ethicits, he deftly avoids being ensnarled in a field that has given new life to old debates and resuscitated some academic philosophers (if not their students). Naess indicates that while such disciplines may be of value in fine-tuning the discussion there is already a basic consensus among common people that animals, plants and landscapes have a value in themselves apart from their usefulness to human beings. There is a further consensus as to the legitimacy of the needs of non-human animals to territory and migration routes as well as the needs of plants and insects to exercise their capacities.

Naess calls upon governments and international organizations to recognize and respond to this non-utilitarian view and to incorporate it into charters, platforms, and conventions guiding international behavior. Furthermore, since most of the endangered species and their habitats are located in the developing world, beset already by extraordinary problems, the developed nations must assist in the effort to protect and preserve these areas which belong to the whole ecosphere.

We must also note that the complex of human economic, social and political problems directly or indirectly affect the future of ecological vitality on this planet and must be solved. Everything is now too inextricably interlinked to divorce human justice issues from ecological issues.

--Don St.John

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE *

By Arne Naess

I

The deep ecological movement is an international movement started about the time of the appearance of Rachel Carson's Silent Spring in 1963. It is a movement concentrated not on the health and well-being of humans exclusively, but on the diversity and richness of life on this fabulous planet symbolized by the exuberance of spring time.

The supporters of the movement are deeply concerned about the decline of the conditions of life on the planet. The degradation and impoverishment of life may turn out to be worse than anything that has happened in the last thousand million years. Paradoxically, it is a devastation caused by the first living being with the joyful capacity to experience every life form and its long history.

Reversing the dominant trend calls not only for minor repairs and local fights against pollution but changes in policies affecting "basic economic, technological, and ideological structures."[1]

These changes will affect our conceptions of justice, largely by extending the relevance of judgments about justice and rights to a broader range of phenomena. But in order to penetrate impersonal policy-making institutions more effectively, the appeal to compassion for animals and to sentiments in general should be combined with a straight forward, unabashed call for justice, nationally and internationally. Or, using a somewhat different terminology, "globally," covering not only the biosphere, but the entire ecosphere. Global thinking has to downplay the borders of states and nations, focusing on ecosystems and the life quality of the living beings dependent on the main systems of the biosphere.

Part of the deep ecological movement is the "bioregional movement" which focuses on the natural boundaries of regions of life in their independence of administrations. An ecologically satisfactory total view focuses on global relations with ecosystems and bioregions as subunits.

II

Whereas there is now a high degree of consensus about the "moral relevance" of any sentient being, or even of any being that meaningfully can be said to have interests, there is, as could be expected, able and competent criticism of the view that rights should be accorded to beings other than humans. Some would say that those who have rights also have obligations, and because only humans have obligations only humans have rights. I shall not join a battle of professionals, but speak up in defense of certain ways of thinking and talking among plain people. These should be made more precise, but I do not see philosophical or scientific reasons for their abandonment. About 100 interviews were conducted using Norwegian people of various occupations and ages.

The overwhelming majority affirms that animals have rights (rettigheter). Some quotes: "I dislike ... snakes, but they ... have the right to live. ... Our planet would be poorer without them." Richness of the planet seems here to be taken as an intrinsic value, whatever the instrumental value for humans. "Yes, animals have a right to live - just as much as humans." A student of law and economics says, however: "Animals have no social rights. ... One cannot accord equality before law to men and animals." And some find the term "right" rather than "rights" appropriate, and stress man's responsibility (Cp. Passmore's classic Man's Responsibility for Nature). These people nevertheless respond positively to the main question, mostly affirming all animals' right to live.

The question "Do we have duties towards animals?" and "Towards plants?" are sometimes answered in terms of rights, always exemplified by the right to live.

The general attitude revealed by these answers is an asset to the deep ecological

movement and increases the prospect of future responsible ecopolitics. No result of analytical philosophy has shown the meaninglessness or the untenability of the view that every being has a right to live and that this is a peculiar right not subject to degree. I have called it "biospherical egalitarianism in principle." The "in principle" is added because we must combine the recognition of this right with deliberate killing of others to satisfy basic needs. Tigers have this kind of right to kill us, as we have to kill them to satisfy a basic need. But because of our unique mental capacities we have unique responsibilities. We have to ask "Is this killing necessary in order to satisfy our basic needs?"

Suppose some animals have for hundreds, or even thousands of years, followed a well-worn path down to a river where they can satisfy their vital need for water. Then some humans cut off access in their expansion of agriculture. They shoot animal "transgressors" asserting that they have "the right" to do so. Suppose a supporter of the deep ecology movement answers that the animals have the right of access to the river, a kind of territorial right. This assertion is then denied by the farmer who says that he has well-defined property rights.

The supporter admits that only adult humans have the capacity to codify rights, but nevertheless children have rights. Therefore the talent of codifying cannot be necessary and sufficient condition of having a right. Animals and landscapes do not announce rights but that does not make it meaningless to ask: "Do they have rights?". Planets do not themselves postulate a force of gravitation, but there is such a force (according to classical physics. Perhaps there are no rights at all as some power-philosophers argue, just as there is no gravitational force according to Einstein.) As regards the ontology of "rights" I am as open for different views as Vilhelm Aubert in the first and last chapter of his In Search of Law (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1983).

The crucial point is not the extension of the concept of rights to non-humans, but the question of the basis for the assertion that they have certain rights. On what basis, except crude power, do humans proclaim the right deliberately to act so as to cause death and suffering to vast numbers of mammals and other animals? Philosophers disagree about this and some philosophers and non-philosophers deny that there is any ethical justification.

There is ample ground for rejecting a special category of rights that can be justified otherwise than by general ethical norms. Thus we are led to ask: is it, in the above example, ethically justifiable for the farmer to cut off the access to water?

Ecological processes know no borders. This also holds for the right to live. If a being has a right there are just and unjust ways of treating it. Norms of distributive justice apply globally, but immense differences in the concrete conditions of human life makes application relative to place and time.

Humans have vastly increased their habitats on Earth. Do people recognize that animals may have a "right" to their traditional territories or at least trails to water in desert areas? Question 23 in the interview asked: "Do you hold that animals have less right to retain their territories or habitat than humans? Or do they have equal right?" The majority thinks that animals do not have less right than humans. Many people find the question very difficult. (Why?) Here is a typical answer: "Ideally they ought to have the same right to territories. I am afraid there is an unsolvable conflict as long as humans consume so many resources."

Conclusions: There is remarkably widespread agreement that animals, and even plants, have rights. If this makes sense, treatment of plants may be just or unjust. The opinion that living beings other than humans have rights should be respected even if some of us as philosophers or lawyers support authoritarian definitions that reject it.

The declarations of human rights by UNESCO and other international institutions have had a positive impact (however modest) on the treatment of humans. Declarations of the rights of living beings in general may in the long run have a similar effect. This is one of the main reasons I support such declarations.

Suppose the large majority of people in a democratic state declare themselves in favor of the rights of animals and the (limited) protection of their territories. Does this state of affairs make it certain that the policies are adopted which are compatible with this attitude? Today, at least in a democracy like that of Norway and Sweden, the answer is no.[2] The reasons for this are complex and many. I shall mention only one.

Practically every adult having a job is a member of and supports pressure groups that are led in a highly professional way by people paid to fight solely for the satisfaction of the economic ambitions of the active members. The consideration of animals and their territories naturally falls outside the duties of these people. Politicians must on the whole yield to pressure organizations. If certain disrespectful or even cruel policies are required to satisfy economic ambitions, they are likely to be tolerated. This situation may change somewhat when people get better informed about the part they play in passively accepting a situation incompatible with their serious ethical principles.

Among the nearly 2000 organizations working for the implementation of human rights one of the most influential is Amnesty International. It is an organization appealing to the sense of justice. It investigates specific cases of political injustice and exerts a mild pressure on the people who are responsible. There is a need for a similar organization in behalf of what is left of free nature. Its task would also be twofold: consolation and encouragement to environmentalists and mild persuasion of the people in power.

III

In dealing with the environment it is more useful to apply the concept of concern for intrinsic values than concepts of moral concern, moral objects, moral value. Among people who are not heavily influenced by certain philosophical or juridical terminology, it is common to be concerned about animals regardless of sentience, and for flowers, patches of landscapes, ecosystems, for their own sake. Often people would say they are beautiful, but also they defend their presence because they "belong there," "are part of the whole" etc. Poisonous plants, for instance. The intrinsic value many people reveal in word and action does not preclude that these "natural objects" also have instrumental value. This is what counts in most human interactions. Though some natural objects are not living beings in a scientific, biological sense, most are endowned with life in a wider sense. Poets have always been aware of this.

I subscribe to the following formulation: The flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth has intrinsic value. The value of nonhuman living beings are of value in themselves, independent of the narrow usefulness for human purposes.[3]

The term "narrow" is inserted because some people speak about the usefulness of conserving free nature because humans have a need to conserve what has intrinsic value, and therefore a need to conserve such nature for its own sake. Because what fulfills human needs is useful, such nature is useful and conservation is justifiable from a broad utilitarian point of view -- according to these people. The adjective "narrow" is inserted to avoid the interpretation that what has "value in itself" is necessarily independent of utilitarian value.

"Aesthetic" value may be a sort of value closely related to the intrinsic value talked about within the deep ecology movement. Humans and only humans form judgments concerning aesthetic value, but people tend to affix the value as a property

of the object itself, "objectively," not as a property that disappears when humans don't appreciate it.

My formulation parallels point 1 of the deep ecology "platform formulation." This is a proposed set of 8 points which are supposed to formulate basic views characteristic of the deep ecology movement.

The essentials of the eight points are as follows.[4] The first two affirm the intrinsic value of the richness and diversity of life on this planet. (Evidently no species endowed with the capacity to understand has the right to treat such a planet as mere resource for itself.)

The third and fourth points insists that only human vital needs could justify reducing the richness and diversity of life on Earth. Such needs do not require a human population of many thousand million. If human behavior is not drastically changed, its population will decrease the quality of the conditions of life for others. Such interference with others is today excessive (Point 5). The necessary changes of human/planet relationship affect fundamental technological, economic, social and political structures (Point 6). In the rich countries, it implies shifting priority from material standard of living to quality of life (Point 7). The activist aspect of the "platform" of the deep ecology movement is affirmed in the last point: those who agree with the seven points have an obligation to try to do something for the implementation of the necessary changes -- however modest in its range and impact (Point 8).

Obviously a social movement is a complex affair and we must expect that among its supporters will be those who might formulate the platform differently.

The impact of arguments stressing the instrumental value of things for humans is today much greater than the impact or arguments stressing intrinsic value. The latter type of argument is absent in World Conservation Strategy.

This is a widely distributed, carefully formulated summary of the contemporary ecological problems, and a survey of what must be done nationally and internationally in order to solve them. It is worked out by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, in cooperation with UNEP, FAO, and UNESCO.

This important document is consistently anthropocentric. In a new edition, a wider and deeper perspective will be applied. Formulations corresponding to point one and other points of the platform of deep ecology will presumably be added.

Why is it important for the solution of contemporary ecological problems that international proclamations are less anthropocentric, less focused on the danger of unecological policies for humans and humans only? The answer is simple: A considerable part of the human population is concerned about nature and natural phenomena for their own sake, as part of a world that is experienced as "theirs." In the present crisis every strong argument must be used, and therefore include those which are not narrowly utilitarian.

Again and again, in talk about plants or animals, even bacteria, utterances like the following appear: "let them live their own life," "we should do so for their own sake," "they belong there," "they came first."

Often there is a sort of concern for a great whole: "We have no right to disturb the balance in nature," "Everything has a mission in nature," "If they are there, then it is meant that they should be there."

When it comes to parts, or, better, gestalts of reality, an important and rather broad use of the term "to live" is important in environmentalism. One of the most potent slogans in a recent major environmental conflict in arctic Norway was "Let the river live!" Intrinsic value was accorded to a comprehensive whole, not limited to the organisms in the water or to the geographically defined riverbed, but also comprising respect for the river-territory

and the native Lapps who tended to protect the river as "part of themselves."

My conclusion: As more and more of the richness and diversity of life disappear on this planet, people become more and more eager trying to preserve some of it for their own sake -- for humanity's sake, but also for life's sake. The way poets feel about the situation gets to be more common. But even in the 1830's, acts of destruction of the "useless" saddened the sensitive. The Norwegian poet Henrik Wergeland accorded intrinsic value to landscapes and cried out: "Do not deprive the landscape of its smiling brooks." It is not right to do it. We should not dominate as we do now. Justice on the global scale demands respect for the planet.

IV

Ecological processes do not respect national borders. Governments of industrial countries have harvested tremendous profits from this fact. They could safely tolerate the poisoning of the air because they could rely on winds to distribute the poison over countries and regions where air and water are despoiled very little or not at all. International "laws of peace and war" have not covered invasion through ecological processes and the depletion of the resources of the global commons -- the atmosphere and the oceans.

Work is in progress to proceed from international environmental cooperation to the creation of a system of international environmental conventions. The "Convention of Bern" of September 19, 1979, furnishes an example. It covers the conservation of European plants and animals, and of their habitats. It envisages far-reaching protection with heavy practical economic consequences. A growing section of the general public interprets this protection whatever the "usefulness" of the plants and animals as a protection of intrinsic values. The living beings have a right to be where they are. We as living beings also have this right, but there are limits to our legitimate interference. We may have a priviledged position (being rational or created in the image of God?) but there are limits.

Limits, yes, but exactly where are they? Abstract general criteria are not difficult to offer, but what is more difficult is the establishment of guidelines for behavior in definite localities. Typical conflict: A winding road through a landscape is considered too narrow, too slow. A cost/benefit analysis concludes with the recommendation of a broad, straight highway. Disturbance of the life and geomorphology of the landscape will be considerable. Opinion against it is increasing, but is too late. The major destructive interference is carried out. Considering that such kinds of yearly interference in free nature cover more than the 80,000 square kilometers of yearly desert expansion, there is reason to take up the ethical aspect for reconsideration in every locality. The importance of local initiative ("think globally, act locally!") stems partly from the character of self-defense which motivates initiative. A human being has an ego and a social self, but self-realization implies the realization of an ecological self that comprises more than human society. From the ethics of altruism we are led to an enlightened ethics of self-interest.[5]

Conventions comparable in thoroughness to that of Bern are desperately needed to cover the Third World. But there is no moral or other basis for requiring developing countries to adopt the environmental conventions of rich nations. Nations in Europe, since the time of the Roman empire, have degraded and impoverished their own environment. Colonial powers have done the same to other regions. A few white settlers played havoc with the ecology of a continent, Australia, through their uncontrolled burnings. Consequently justness, not pity, requires the rich nations to cooperate with the developing countries, and help finance the implementation of ecological conventions.

The cost is considerable. Consider the fairly small parks of Thailand. Illegal logging and decimation of wildlife goes on.

Wardens, badly paid but fond of nature, protect wildlife, but are sometimes shot by poachers hired by corrupt politicians. The poor are not against keeping the wildlife protected, but it requires manpower and money.

Thailand is only one country where laws are enacted but enforcement is feeble or absent. Rich nations can do a lot to help the ecologically educated of these countries in their courageous fight. The new basic slogan "sustainable development" implies "long term ecologically responsible development." The ethical imperative to assist the poor now includes their ecological policies.

The mechanisms of international law and conventions like that of Bern must play a significant part in the fourteen kinds of international action with high priority according to the World Conservation Strategy. Unhappily even this short priority checklist is barely known. I think it justifiable to quote the first five in toto:

a. review of the coverage and effectiveness of international law relevant to living resources, and development of new laws to remedy any deficiencies;

b. implementation of international conservation conventions;

c. multilateral and bilateral assistance for reforestation, the restoration of degraded environments, and the protection of the support systems of fisheries and of genetic resources;

d. multilateral and bilateral assistance for the design and implementation of ecologically appropriate policies and the establishment and maintenance of effective conservation procedures, laws and organizations.

The rest of the list covers more specific actions such as "the implementation of the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, of the Convention on the Regulation of Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, and of analogous regional conventions." The term implementation is crucial: There are lots of conventions already in existence, but governments do not take them seriously. Little is done at the level of mass-communication to inform the public about the reasons for the conventions. Still less isdone to appeal to the ethics of people, including their sense of justice. If the rich nations do not mend their ways, there is little hope.

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1. A. Naess, "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects," Philosophical Inquiry, 8, 1986, p. 14.
2. About discrepanices between individual attitudes and general policies, see Lester Milbrath, Environmentalism: Vanguard for a New Society, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984.
3. Point 1 of an 8-point-version in my Ecology, Community, Lifestyle, in print.
4. For details and comments, see, e.g., "The Deep Ecology Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects," Philosophical Inquiry, 8, 1986, p. 13 et seq.
5. Cp. Naess, Self-realization. An Ecological Approach to Being in the World, Keith Memorial Lecture, Murdoch University, ISSN 0811-5958, ISBN 86905-101-6.

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