

Dissertation Title : Ecosophy and Environmental Education
in the Philosophy of Arne Naess

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Abstract

This dissertation is an attempt to respond to the global problem of an environmental crisis that has threatened the well-being and survival of humanity as a whole for decades. The root cause of this crisis is the pursuit of a lifestyle said to be luxurious, civilized, and developed at the expense of the natural world. The pursuit to satisfy unlimited needs and greed in capitalistic societies has propelled the exploitation of the natural environment beyond its carrying capacity. If human continue treating natural world in this manner, they have to suffer its consequences.

'Environmental Ethics', which appeared in the early 1970s, could not solve these complicated problems as they first claimed. Being a branch of applied ethics, environmental ethics uses classical ethical theories such as Aristotelian teleological ethics, utilitarianism of Bentham and Mills, deontology of Immanuel Kant, as well as virtue ethics for solving moral problems. In spite of the differences, these ethical theories share two common features: Firstly, orientedness towards human-to-human relationships, and secondly, an anthropocentric (human-centered) approach. However, anthropocentrism is said to be a motif that drives human needs and greed to exploit the natural environment without respect for the value of and concerns for the carrying capacity of it.

Arne Naess's approach in his Ecosophy T is non-anthropocentric. Naess uses Spinoza's ontology to prove the unity and interdependency between man and environment, to approve an intrinsic value of the non-humans, and to establish an equality between humans

and non-humans. Moreover, the researcher finds that Naess's Ecosophy T implies environmental education that paves the way for the development of the intuition of an identification with non-humans on a micro, meso and macro level. This proves the possibility of sustainable consciousness for the conservation of the natural environment.

Naess further argues that his non-anthropocentric approach supports diversity. His Ecosophy T on Spinoza's philosophy is an example of how one can develop a personal Ecosophy based on one's unique metaphysical or religious backgrounds, either Christian, Buddhist, or in absence of religion. Each person can "reach the system's conclusions using ways of feeling and reason familiar to us, rather than accepting all of Naess' particular steps and differences of his reasoning" (Naess, 1989, p. 4) and without a need to follow Spinoza or him exclusively.

