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The Encouraging Richness and Diversity of Ultimate Premises in Environmental Philosophy

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I

Those who join efforts to support basic changes of human attitudes and policies in their relations to nature have different philosophic and religious creeds. The richness and diversity of ultimate positions within these creeds is a source for future deep cultural diversity. It is one of the central tasks of environmental philosophers to study different positions, but not to try to reduce the ultimate differences.

This article is motivated by my opposition to look for a single environmental philosophy or one environmental ethics. There are agreements we should note with satisfaction, others that we should note with concern: has undue conformity, calcification, lack of imagination, open-mindedness or critical attitudes set in? It happens in science, but Thomas Kuhn and others have made people aware of it there.

Supporters of the deep ecology movement in the so-called second, third and fourth worlds have in part widely different cultural backgrounds from those of the first world. It is quite natural that the different religious, metaphysical and philosophical trends color the ultimate premises in systematizations from which the ultimate parts of an environmental ethics are derived. But should all groups within the fairly homogeneous first world have a set of ultimate premises in common? Recently some Christian groups have made use of the normative statement that all which is directly created by God has intrinsic value. There are other groups who cannot make use of such an ultimate or penultimate norm. I find it encouraging that there are considerable differences, and I hope this situation will continue. But even Max Oelschlaege, 1. after a careful account of different ideas of wilderness, ends his book with an expression of a need for one single 'postmodern' paradigm. I have the feeling that he has the whole world in mind, that is, a paradigm that humans on this planet have in common.

The influence of the deep ecology movement—*roughly* the movement by people who act in favor of a change 'in everything' in order to overcome the ecological crisis—is dependent upon activism in the sense of decisions and actions in particular (dated) situations, indirectly motivated by religious or philosophical fundamental premises. The influence is not dependent upon agreement with the premises. It is not even dependent upon mutual understanding at this level. I do not clearly understand Gary Snyder's ultimates, and I probably never will.

In most cases of joint action or effort it is irrelevant which premises are used as ultimates as long as they are considered to imply the principles of the movement ("level 2") and together with other premises, the concrete decisions.

Let us consider the Leopold formula as an example: "A thing is right where it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community". Some might use this sentence as a formulation of a fundamental normative premiss, that is, they would try to derive other norms from it, and not try to derive it from other norms. Others might only

take it as a convenient point of departure, and spell out a set of sentences that they think are more precise, but which may still be considered to be plausible interpretations of the Leopold sentence. Then they would specify one or more of the 'precizations' indicating agreement, with one or more reporting disagreement. What is of greater interest is that some supporters would strongly disagree, or find the Leopold formula difficult or impossible to understand clearly. Personally, I belong to this last category of supporters of the D.E. -movement. But I do not feel motivated to argue, because the so-called 'fascist' implications obviously can be avoided by suitable interpretations. The 8 points which G.Sessions and I have tentatively proposed as formulations [see the editor's introduction to this issue for the 8 points] of a set of principles of the deep ecology movement can then be derived..2. *What is more pressing than debating ultimate norms is to work out consequences for priorities of certain kinds of action.*

As an example, let us consider the problems facing the introduction of wolves in areas in which they were common x years ago, x being specified on the basis of a set of criteria for desirable restoration of ecosystems.

The protracted, emotionally intense debate on wolves in Norway covers thousands of pages in articles and books. Every main area of economic, social, political, and ethical policies are involved. It shows how environmental ethical views make up only a part of a total and can only be understood internally related to a *total view*.

There is not in this connection room for a careful introduction of a concept of a total view. I distinguish a total view from (always partial) verbal articulations of a total view. One of the several ways to articulate parts of total view is to focus on the premiss/conclusion relations. This is done by the ecologist Ivar Myrnes and myself. Of the relatively deep norms implied are some concerning suffering. We take the sufferings of sheep more seriously than most of those who write strongly in favor of introduction of wolves. We also take more seriously the right of the small sheep-owners in big forests to continue to live 'where they belong' on a traditional level as ecologically on a higher level than their urban critics. I suggest that the study of fundamental ethical norms which we attempt to use in the ecological crisis should be 'operationalized' to a higher degree than is the habit by professional philosophers. The point is well argued by Bryan G. Norton..3. It would be interesting to see an application of the Leopold-formula to the problems facing the introduction of wolves in a certain area. I make extensive use of the norm 'self-realization!', but it is more a sketch of how one must proceed, than a set of careful, step by step derivation..4. This would involve hundreds of descriptive and normative sentences.

Even the style of the above deliberation reveals that I belong to a somewhat different tradition of metaethical discussion and methodology than the chief participants of the ethical monism/pluralism debate. It may be of interest to continue by extending the perspective, leaving the narrow concern for task- minded theorizing within the deep ecology movement.

Can deeply different total views be compared as to the validity of norms and descriptions? The answer affects comparability of environmental philosophies.

II

Suppose that a philosophical genius manages to articulate a consistent set of answers to a list of basic questions of formal logic, general methodology, epistemology, ontology, ethics, ...The list is supposed to include all areas of inquiry comprising questions which are posed as ultimates.

The above formulations include the terms 'basic' or 'ultimate' which of course admit of

various interpretations. The same holds good of the term 'consistent' in the expression 'consistent set of answers to a set of basic questions' because of the varieties of systematizations of formal logic, including deontic logic. But let us for a moment try to set aside the complication resulting from the lack of preciseness of the above mentioned terms.

Suppose now that the superphilosopher succeeds in using a philosophy of life and life style to derive decisions as to how to act in concrete situations. For this purpose he or she (of course) needs hypotheses about the particularities of each situation. I shall then say that s/he applies a total view verbally articulated in a total system. It is not required that the systematizer keeps the same view all the time. His methodology may furnish room for changes through renewed reflections and deliberation. His total view is not static, but dynamic.

The analogy to a vast hypothetico-deductive system in natural science is limited, but instructive. The derivations as to how to act start with abstract, general sentences, some are descriptive, others normative, for instance in the form of grammatical imperatives. The system itself is 'normative', that is, it contains at least one ultimate norm, but is more likely to contain many. Observational tests in natural science rest on sentences describing the experimental setup and other particular features of the test-situation and procedures. In application of the normative system a concrete decision describing an action (or inaction) is derived. It is a normative sentence derived from the set of ultimate premisses, plus a description of the concrete situation at hand.

If the system is to an important degree inspired by ecology in a certain fairly wide sense of the term, the superphilosopher must be supposed to have (miraculously) succeeded at a given date to have a *full* articulation of what I call an *ecosophy*, and achieved full consistency between theory and practice. He practises what he teaches. The limitation implied in 'at a given date' reminds us that the incessant large stream of events poses an incessant stream of new questions. They may imply corrections of one or more hypotheses within the system - hypotheses only tentatively assumed to be tenable. This threatens norms which have the hypotheses as part of their sets of premisses of daily decisions. Changes of hypotheses normally result in changes of norms.

Suppose now the ecological superphilosopher derives norms telling him that he should convince his colleagues. He may find their writings fully understandable but false, or at least not entirely true. The conclusion 'false' he derives from the articulation of *his own* total view.

The superphilosopher is justified in formulating a critical conclusion based on his own premisses. How could he do otherwise? But let us assume he is willing openly to acknowledge that he interprets the texts of the others using his own rules of interpretation, that is, his own system of hermeneutics. A second superphilosopher may legitimately do the same, arriving at the same kind of, but opposite, conclusion as the first. The two seem to disagree, but do they really? It is not established that they disagree about what is the correct answer to any *definite* question, because, among other obstacles, differences in the hermeneutics of the two may cause differences in interpretations of any formulation of the question.

Furthermore, I cannot conceive of a third superphilosopher who could, on neutral ground, decide that a theorem asserted by the first and denied by the second, is right, valid or true. In order to do this he would have to do it on a basis not dependent upon the contested ultimate or other premisses of the two rivals. Even the meaningfulness of a comparison as to validity is problematic.

Peaceful coexistence of deeply different cultures seems to thrive on communicational imperfection, or sheer practical incomparability joined with some mutual tolerance and

norms of nonviolence. Or, more simply, through the cultures being scattered through practically impenetrable space, like they were some thousand years ago on this planet. We need not assume theoretical incomparability or impenetrability.

There are texts available by historians of philosophy that trace the long complex development of mutually incompatible interpretations of the texts by Immanuel Kant and others. One of the things that emerge is that there is rarely, if ever, a development suggesting future agreement or even future mutual deep understanding. This holds even when there is an increase in the number of interpretations which seem to be definitively rejected by everybody.

What is especially important is the tendency of seemingly extraordinarily competent researchers of successive generations to disagree. Therefore we cannot explain away all the discrepancies by insinuations of incompetence. The history of ideas furnishes some help in explaining long range trends. But there is no indication that general trends will stabilize. The same holds good of reconstructions of old philosophies the Kantian, Spinozist, Buddhist,...

The question may be put: Do continued disagreements point to a basic weakness of the program of systematic articulation of total views? Are the disagreements or signs of lack of complete comparability a weakness? Especially since the time of Auguste Comte, it has been common among scientists to answer 'yes'. But scientists trying to go beyond the more or less arbitrary limitation of the deepness of their questions posed by the particular sciences, have been less sure. Their answers to foundation problems, or their rejection of the meaningfulness of posing foundation problems, have elicited a spectrum of diverse, often clearly mutually incompatible answers.

Even if there might be ways to show that reality is 'one;' in a sense of 'one' that can be clearly conceived, it does not follow that adequate, verbal accounts of this oneness should or must converge, or be practically translatable into each other. On the contrary, it may rather be a sign of stagnation, like in physics, when basic theories are translatable into each other. It is for me difficult to believe that future cultural richness and diversity can continue under conditions of increasing similarity of ultimate views. *This applies to ultimate ethical and metaethical views.*

There are less abstract reasons for welcoming some disagreements, incompatibilities and incomparabilities: reasons suggested by the development of cultural anthropology. It tells us about the genesis of a philosophy and a total view: the social matrix, the influence of the personal experiences, including the reading of other philosophers. Furthermore, it teaches us of unresolved, persistent mutual 'misinterpretations', unsuccessful polemics, and other phenomena manifesting the precarious character of the vast, unfinished, and perhaps unfinishable hermeneutic enterprise.

Let me change perspective from the systematic to the historical. From about 1870 a variety of deeply different interpretations of Kant's texts saw the light. An astonishing series of brilliant Neo-Kantian philosophies appeared. I do not see any likelihood nor desirability of a narrowing down of the range of interpretations and reconstructions of Kant's philosophy. They may all have a fairly short life time of strong impact, but the range may not narrow down because of the many abandoned enterprises.

I appreciate philosophers strongly inspired by Kant, who spontaneously answer all main 'refutations' or 'doubts,' with fresh and interesting counterattacks. Or, consider the reaction of a young Heideggerian when confronted with one of the most atrocious sentences of the Heidegger idiom: He laughed heartily and offered a still more atrocious one, adding "Heidegger does not admire his own style, he regrets that he does not find any better." So we are invited to find out what he means and to do a better job expressing it. Or, consider the variety within the phenomenological trend started by Edmund

Husserl. The trend, I hope, will continue. My own 'gestalt ontology' belongs here..5. The task has no end.

The long history of interpretations of Spinoza now covers more than three hundred years and shows as wide a divergence as the Kantian. Famous and inspiring are the interpretations by Johan Wolfgang Goethe and other 'Romantics'. Hegel's interpretation is very much alive in the Spinoza interpretations within the tradition of the Hegel-Marx—Frankfurter School. I see no prospect of, nor desirability of, a narrowing down of *divergence* of Spinoza interpretations, and expect new variations to appear along future paths of human ethical exploration. The greatness of a philosophical text consists largely in its capacity to elicit and lead the creativity of generation after generation. Biographical research shows Spinoza heavily inspired by medieval Jewish and Arabian philosophies. It suggests a perception and apperception of animals largely, but not completely, in tune with his contemporaries. What some people assert today, 'The dog is man's best friend!', Spinoza might have found in principle impossible. But even in biographical interpretations differences are considerable, perhaps greater than at the time of Goethe.

Philosophers may look for the best interpretation of a text, but in metaphilosophical hermeneutics and also in the history of ideas, the variety is considered a cultural asset.

A trend towards a uniform, not to say monolithic, way of conceiving reality, may be an ominous sign of stagnation of the total human enterprise on this planet, a sign of cultural conformity. Environmentalism and the quest for a greener society will not, I hope, contribute to conformity, but it might! That is the reason I take these abstract themes seriously and wish many others will do the same.

III

The discussion about the ultimate premisses and norms of a green society, its political and social philosophy, and about the conceptual basis of sustainable development and economic growth, proceeds without proper attention to the desirability of deeply different green societies, including significantly different ways of realizing economic progress rather than growth. General economic anthropology studying contemporary industrial economies from the outside is highly relevant.

The danger of conformity increases, when attempts are made to reduce three main social movements into one, into a gigantic quasi-green movement comprising the peace, social justice and deep ecology movements. Until the late 70s many deeply concerned peace workers did not quite trust the concerned environmentalists, but obviously the threats of war, the armaments, not to speak of wars themselves, have consequences which necessitate close cooperation between activists of the two movements. Until the late 80s there was in some quarters a similar lack of trust between the deep ecology and the 'social justice movement'. Under this title I arbitrarily class the international humanitarian efforts and political movements like the Marcuse type or Frankfurter movement and antihegemonic political groups. The overlapping with political efforts of green parties are obvious. The deep ecology movement has an inseparable ecopolitical aspect assuming significant changes of societies to be a requirement of any long range effort to overcome the ecological crisis. Some competition for recruitment is unavoidable, but should not cause theoretical disputes.

Mutual support and global solidarity within the deep ecology movement are called for in the fight for significant change of policies, but it is counterproductive to try to narrow down the variety of religious and philosophical ultimate premisses. The only reason to attack a religious or philosophical ultimate premiss seems to be the assumption that a particular environmentally unacceptable position follows with necessity from it. But I do not find that such necessity, or even likelihood, is established in contemporary ecological

debates.

IV

An instructive example of a comparison of very comprehensive systems, each with aspirations of totality, is offered by Susan Armstrong-Buck..6. Her introductory sentences admirably describe a problematic situation.

That the natural world has intrinsic value—value in and of itself, independent of human preferences—is intuitively and emotionally acknowledged by many people. I believe that this recognition is crucial to the maintenance of the beautiful, life-giving ecosystem which is our planet. Yet the growth of this apprehension into a widely shared ethos capable of guiding human activity has yet to happen. It requires, among other things, an adequate metaphysical theory, since a metaphysical theory can give penetration to and a wider and consistent application of our intuitive and feeling—based apprehension. ... "What would such a theory be like?

Her answer: Alfred North Whitehead provides such a theory.

My point is, roughly, that "a widely shared ethos" is desirable, but not at a deeper level than that of such assertions as "the natural world has intrinsic value". The questions are of course philosophically relevant: On what ultimate basis do you *conclude* that the natural world has intrinsic value? Which are your ultimate rules of inference which permit you to arrive at such a conclusion? Disagreements at this level may be deep and lasting indefinitely. One may talk of four levels of premiss/conclusion relations: the rock bottom, ultimate *first level*, a *second level* which contains tentative formulations of principles of the deep ecology movement. Here the attribution of intrinsic value, inherent worth, etc., enters. At a *third level*, there are consequences of the second level (plus of course a lot of additional descriptive premisses about the 'state of the world', a World Watch Institute expression). A *fourth level* is of extreme importance in total views: the level of decisions in concrete situations. When it is said that to find ultimate premisses is the main problem of environmental philosophy, I think it makes such philosophy much too narrow and also destructively isolated from environmentally valuable total views ("ecosophies"). A Zen Buddhist, after many years of intense study and practice, said that *basically* he personally would *not mind* that the whole planet was covered with asphalt. He supported ecologically responsible policies, respected nature, but considered human ultimate freedom to be completely independent of what happens to the planet. That is, to my mind, going too far!

Above, I referred to "A richness and diversity of cultures" rather than "The richness..." of cultures, because the actual history of human cultures exemplifies horrors of war, cruelty and injustice. I do not here even try to discuss the difficult question of where to draw the line, and what to do when war threatens.

From the above point of view it is appropriate to answer Susan Armstrong-Buck: Yes. Whitehead, or better, a Whiteheadian approach among many possible, offers . *kind of* theory you look for. And it does so in an outstanding way at a high level of contemporary Western philosophy. But potentially there may be indefinitely many other approaches that also offer such a kind of theory. A Spinozist approach is only one of them. I am glad to say that Armstrong-Buck does not directly contest such a pluralist view explicitly. The study of often crude polemics of Stoics against Epicurians, Kant against Hume, Kierkegaard against Hegel, antimetaphysicians against metaphysicians, seems to me to substantiate the view that formidable philosophical insight requires only a moderate level of clear interpersonal cognitive discourse. A philosopher may offer new insights, but his refutation of others may be far off the mark.

The expositions by Armstrong-Buck of Whitehead's metaphysics contribute to the understanding of a kind of metaphysical view that provides ultimate cognitive foundations of actions elicited by "our intuitive and feeling-based apprehension." (p. 341) She compares this with Spinoza.

Her description of Spinoza's system is of interest in so far as it shows that within the manifold of interpretations of Spinoza, there are some which make his text inadequate where Whitehead's may be adequate. But those who 'feel at home' with some kind of Spinozist approach, will not find it reasonable to choose Armstrong-Buck's interpretation of the texts of Spinoza..7. The same holds good of the interpretation by Genevieve Lloyd..8. The situation is not lamentable from the point of view of the ecological crisis because people with seemingly deeply different religious or metaphysical ultimate views may work together in practical efforts to improve the ethical standard of human environmental interaction. Different religious and metaphysical views need not weaken, but may significantly strengthen the deep ecology movement. Conformity would limit the appeal to a small section of humanity.

I shall not defend my personal Spinozistic approach 'against' a Whiteheadian one, but take as a point of departure the following statement by Armstrong-Buck: "Spinoza has recently been presented by deep ecologists as a guide in our development of environmental ethics." (p. 258).

What has happened is that Spinoza's texts have functioned as a major source of inspiration for a tiny group of theorists within the deep ecology movement. But I am glad to see that texts of other classical Western philosophers, Hegel, Schelling, Bergson, Heidegger, Whitehead, Wittgenstein,... also have made an impact. Recently even Nietzsche, including a *rather original* interpretation of his theory of the overman (*Übermensch*) has been found at least compatible. Most supporters of the deep ecology movement have never heard of any of the names mentioned here. I don't think they ever need to.

According to Armstrong-Buck,

Spinoza's metaphysics suffers from the fatal defect of deterministic monism: ... all entities are understood as modes of the one substance and hence as causally determined. While Spinoza argues convincingly for the peace of mind obtained by means of determinism (since no one is ultimately responsible for what he or she does), his theory leaves no room for creative individuals. Indeed, the modes themselves are arbitrarily introduced into the system. (p. 259).

It is difficult for me to find out why Armstrong-Buck has selected just this interpretation among a great richness of interpretations. I shall only mention some reflections to show why I do not favor the selection.

In medieval Latin *causa* has many connotations of relevance for the understanding of Spinoza's usages of the term. One has to consult dictionaries of medieval Latin. That *substantia*, conventionally translated as "*substance*" in English causes the *modi* ("modes") in a sense of "cause" familiar to us today when we talk about determinism, is highly doubtful. The *modi* of *substantia* may not be caused by *substantia* in any such sense. Maybe, if *substantia* causes a human being to act in such a way, the effect does not come after the cause, that is, perhaps there is no time relation in such a case. Why not think of the relation as an internal relation rather than an external one? In any case, why interpret the relation in such a way that humans must lack responsibility for their actions, or lack creativity? Spinoza says that human power is part of God's power, so why not add to this that human creativity may be part of *Deus's* creativity as *natura naturans*? Why not interpret the term *homo liber* and the 'road to greater freedom' (Part 5) as consistent with what we today would call the road to human freedom?

I use the Latin terms to remind us that the mutual relations of the connotations of the key Latin term in the *Ethics*. 9. are clarified through several hundred explicatory sentences. The originality of the system of Spinoza is scarcely appreciated without a study of the 'Spinozistic color' of the connotation of key terms, including *causa* and *determinata*. Such a study reveals, I think, that what Spinoza calls determination does not imply fatalism.

V

What I suggest is, in short, that if a contemporary environmental philosopher, including myself, A, feels at home with a classical philosophy P and another philosopher B, with another philosophy Q, A will tend to adjust the interpretation of P in the direction of A's environmentalism. As a side issue, A, perhaps a little too eagerly, points to interpretations of Q as inconsistent with environmentalism, whereas B will tend to do the opposite, defending Q, mildly attacking P. This can be done without violation of the hermeneutic rules of historical research. Considering the great problems and opportunities which confront philosophers in the ecological crisis, a side issue should remain a side issue. Like another side issue: to point out, if we feel we are competent, to supporters of the deep ecology movement who are inspired by Heidegger or by Whitehead, something that may strengthen their own interpretation. In short, a kind of mutual aid in the sense of Krapotkin. The widening cooperation of supporters across state borders and cultural differences depends upon openness of mind, tolerance, or even positive appreciation, of religious and metaphysical differences. Few social movements can boast of such a vast area of agreement on non-ultimate levels—down to the hundreds of specific direct environmental actions going on at any time. Philosophers are well equipped to help to articulate clearly and convincingly the complex premiss/conclusion relations between the ultimate and the practical level.

Mechanical acceptance of the derivation of ethically relevant decisions on the basis of a set of norms and hypotheses, I agree must be out of the question. Our ethical decisions are, in principle always, 'at the depth of 60000 fathoms' (Kierkegaard). At a choice point we may exclaim 'No!' to any concrete decision derived from cherished beliefs, and make a decision of actually going squarely against 'everything' we so far have considered established. When the application of a fairly general guideline elicits in a particular situation a stormy 'No!,' there is mostly need to inspect sets of hypotheses (beliefs) the acceptance of which are the implicit premisses of 'No!,'—and also to consider normative guidelines. Perhaps the derivation of the less basic guideline is uncritical, or maybe both guidelines have relevant ambiguities in their tentative formulations. In short, there are indefinitely many factors involved, but this does not detract from the value of a systematization as a surveyable set of guidelines. I envy those who can work adequately without.

It is not essential whether our attempt to systematize ethical rules or principles starts with 100 or only one ultimate general rule. If only one, a great many comments as to how to interpret its formulation will presumably be needed; if 100, comments will focus on the many questions of internal consistency. And in both cases there are indefinitely many relevant hypotheses needed to describe the world which motivates the establishment of an environmental ethics. Some philosophers will presumably, like myself, continue to search for rather general principles adapted to new moral perceptions among people who are not professional philosophers. This I find compatible with what Eugene C. Hargrove says: "New moral perceptions will not be brought about by moral philosophers, but rather by everyone in general and by no one in particular."¹⁰ It is also compatible with a strong tradition in applied ethics that tries to improve perception and apperception in fairly narrowly defined classes of situations, rather than to construct more or less general rules. Hargrove's reference to progress in playing a game is helpful here: The general rules are few, but the kinds of particular problematic situations are overwhelmingly rich and demand creativeness in their application.

VI

The pluralism, or manifold, I am talking positively about in this article is not completely unrelated to recent monism/pluralism discussions. The concept of an ecosophy, a total view in part inspired by the ecological crisis, implies an affirmation of coherence and consistency of ethical views, including their relation to concrete decisions in particular situations. Complete articulations of a total view is out of reach, but perhaps a useful fiction. A mature, integrated human being somehow has to assume an integrated way of thinking and acting.

Articulated ethical and metaethical views including ultimate premisses about the nature of ethics, make up an ingredient within a systematization of a total view. A sort of 'monism' may here be said to be implied. The man/nature relation is an ecosophy treated as a subordinate whole, in part ethical, in part non-ethical. But the effort to be coherent and consistent is of course only a fragment of the efforts of ethical reflection and deliberation. Any systematization is a kind of tool and frequent changes normal.

So much about a kind of monism. It is compatible with a positive evaluation of a manifold of total views, each constituting an organic whole, a 'one-ness', a monism.

In the major area of ethics and metaphysical questions of central ethical relevance, J. Baird Callicott has pointed to a Hume-Darwin-Leopold line of social, human and environmental ethics. He essentially seems to maintain that work along that line will furnish the coherent, adequate theory which supporters of the environmental movement need. Excellent if 'one' is substituted by 'the'. From my systems oriented point of view an invitation to work along that line is valuable and will hopefully be accepted by many who align themselves with the principles of the deep ecology movement. But there are other lines that need to be further explored, among them the Kantian - in a wide sense. The norm that a person should never be treated merely as a means may be generalized to cover all living beings, not only people. Kantian ideas in biology have long ago been suggested by von Uexkull.¹¹ Philosophical Buddhism offers lines, for instance, the one suggested by Gary Snyder.¹² Gandhi sometimes considered Buddhism a reformed Hinduism. His interpretation of the *Gita* and metaphysics of Self-realization may furnish some ultimate premisses of a total view in part inspired by the ecological crisis. He was a firm defender of animal rights.¹³

Supporters of the deep ecology movement belong to different cultures and subcultures, their social backgrounds are different, but they are able to cooperate because of a remarkable similarity of attitudes, remarkable similarities of slogans, remarkable similarity in practical situations.

Working with systematization, as some of us do, who are engaged in an ecological movement, it is useful to look into Vaihingers's great work, *The Philosophy of As If*. There are of course, and will not be any systematically articulated total view in terms of premiss/conclusion relation. It is a fiction. But in our attempt to act in a totally responsible way, we may be said, when we use arguments, to *implicitly* assume to have a consistent view. What we leave out of consideration, we implicitly assume not to be relevant. In this sense, we implicitly assume a consistent total view.

What we *explicitly* say in ethical conflicts, is a different question. Word by word reports for or against certain decisions may well be characterized as derivations from "a hodgepodge of conflicting and unrelated moral principles, much like the principles of a good play developed out of chess theory in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."¹⁴ Cultural anthropology studying an ethics as a set of moral customs, will sometimes offer analyses of such observed verbal articulations. I find it encouraging that Hargrove is a kind of "moral pluralist", "who is content to work with jumbles of

somewhat unrelated, and sometimes conflicting, views and attitudes from various sources, without succumbing to the urge [which I perhaps have] to transform them into a unified system." .15. But our environmental ethic as material for a cultural anthropology is by some of us viewed as a source for further studies, and here articulation of fragments of total views are of practical and theoretical importance.

The supporters of the deep ecology movement cooperate in the fight to implement decisions on the level of concrete situations, with everybody who sincerely supports a decision. What could the supporters achieve without cooperation with people whose general argumentation pattern, for instance in terms of premiss/conclusion relations, is shallow or merely concerned with reforms? It is of interest to note that there are people who explicitly reject a definite proposal, for instance that of Naess and Sessions, of a formulation of the principles of the deep ecology movement, but are inspired by the same philosophers as are many of the supporters. A.T. Nuyen advocates a "kind of anthropocentrism" and "the view that nature has no value independent of human beings." He derives these points from Heidegger, who is often used to derive the opposite conclusion. He professes a kind of instrumental view. "Only within the framework of that ethics [the Heideggerian existential ethics] does any practical policy toward the environment *make sense*, in much the same way as it makes sense for a pianist to care for his or her instrument, and for the Indians to cherish and preserve the forests." .16.

VII

A question of the following kind has been asked: How does our idea of at least partly or occasionally incomparable, differences at the ultimate level (of premisses) of a total view, relate to "the case against untranslatable languages," as conceived by Donald Davidson?

The framework within which Davidson discusses untranslatability is conspicuously different from the one -within which I am inclined not only to assert at least practical, if not theoretical, untranslatability and the more radical practical incomparability of sets of ultimate premisses of an articulated total view. In what follows I refer to the text of Donald Davidson's article "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," in his *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984. Here are the most relevant places:

There can be no doubt that the relation between being able to translate someone's language and being able to describe his attitudes is very close. Still, until we can say more about *what* this relation is, the case against untranslatable languages remains obscure....(p. 186) By imagining a sequence of languages, each close enough to the one before to be acceptably translated into it, we can imagine a language so different from English as to resist totally translation into it. Corresponding to this distant language would be a system of concepts altogether alien to us....-(p. 186) We may identify conceptual schemes with languages, then, or better, allowing for the possibility that more than one language may express the same scheme, sets of intertranslatable languages....(p. 185) The idea is then that something is a language, and associated with a conceptual scheme, whether we can translate it or not, if it stands in a certain relation (predicting, organizing, facing, or fitting) experience (nature, reality, sensory promptings). The problem is to say what the relation is, and to be clearer about the entities related. (p. 191)

There is a small minority of the supporters who have articulated ultimate or near ultimate premisses of their total views. Thus, Gary Snyder accepts the sentence "The universe and all creatures in it are intrinsically in a state of complete wisdom, love and compassion." .17. What is intended by the sentence may become successively clearer by years of study of philosophical Buddhism, and through a life spent together with people

who try to live according to expressed Buddhist principles. I feel lost. Personally I use sentences expressing ultimate and near ultimate levels of a total view of a Spinozist kind. Perhaps he would feel lost, listening.

Let us suppose it is asked: Can the Buddhist example be *translated* into a sentence within my Spinozist vocabulary? My answer, if shortness is required, is No. There is here of course not a question of logical impossibility. I take the hypothesis of translatability to be an empirical one. The negative answer is not obviously relevant to what Donald Davidson is trying to clarify.

I have to do mostly with sets of premisses of Spinozist, Kantian, Heideggerian, and Whiteheadian character. (The S,K,H, or W premisses). One set of premisses are supposed to be expressed in Latin, two in German, and one in the English sentences. What about their translatability? They may tentatively be said to express conceptual schemes.

The translatability of whole languages into each other need not be discussed. For me it is not a major problem whether my Norwegian or my English can fairly well *convey the content* of philosophical texts written in other languages. It is crucial to what degree the *content* of the S,K,H or W premisses can be fairly well conveyed and be roughly compared in terms of agreements and disagreements. This does not imply translatability.

Sometimes a conventional quasi-translation into English is enough as a starting point. The problem then is whether extensive *comments* of the quasi-translation can convey the content. Example: "There is or can only be one substance" (*substantia*), and "that you are" (*tat tvam asi*), present good quasi-translation of parts of a Latin and a Sanskrit text. The problem is to what extent a couple of pages or volumes of comments can convey fairly adequately what is intended to be expressed by the two sentences as conceived by their authors, and there is also the problem of comparison of contents of the crucial sentences. Attention has to focus on the terms '*substantia*', and '*tat*', that is, fragments of vocabularies, not so much on grammar and syntax. Some philosophers think that the differences in the structures of languages narrow down the range of metaphysical positions that can be articulated and compared. That is not my experience. It does not affect my thesis that a moderate degree or extent of comparability is present. "The Whorfian approach" connects with my problem concerning understanding and comparability of ultimates. I am for the guarded optimism of Masson-Oursel and his conception of a *philosophie compare*: there is a *limited* comparability..18.

Does the S,K,H or W character encompass or imply four conceptual frames, for instance, frames of general methodology (rules of logical inference, rules of testing hypotheses, rules of assessing 'intention' etc.)? How are they related to the question of comparing validity or adequacy of the rules? What is the outlook for introducing a vocabulary such that the S,K,H and W premisses could be described by means of that definite, fairly sender- and receiver-precise, vocabulary?

From my experience of attempts to translate Spinoza's *Ethics* from the Latin text into English and into Sanskrit (in this case only the very first part of part 1), I conclude that there is *no chance* of providing an adequate translation. But the conclusion holds only for certain interpretations of the term 'translation'. I require here of an adequate translation of a text consisting of three sentences, that it consists of three sentences, each being a translation of one of the originals. If each of the sentences requires comments, perhaps even books, to elucidate what intended to be conveyed, implying, for instance, comprehensive studies of cultural anthropology, the resultant total document does not include an adequate translation in the sense adopted here. It is more like the "*that you are*" of *tat tvam asi*. It is placed in an English text and made the object of extensive commentary.

What about the terms substance, *substantia*, *Substanz*, *dravya*, as used by Descartes,

Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Heidegger, Whitehead and Sanskrit writers? I do not see much chance of a vocabulary into which what these authors try to convey by the term can be adequately rendered in a translation in a sense I am familiar with. This does not imply that somebody may not adequately *understand* what all of them try to convey by the term. (Personally I am at a loss). What I pretend is that one may build reconstructions of ultimate premisses of various philosophies delimited through definite texts, like that of the *Ethics* of Spinoza. The reconstructions try to keep near that of the original in certain essentials, but do not pretend historical accuracy.

Put in a crude way: I believe that Spinoza may be said to have 'had' a total view (a combined *Welt-und Lebensanschauung*), which colors the meaning of all his key terms. We cannot in a few words articulate that color 'itself'. People who have not studied his texts thoroughly seem to catch something of it. Life-long study (like my own) need not help as much as might be expected. There seems to be a law of diminishing returns operating. This makes it excessively difficult to translate him adequately in the sense suggested. One has to offer complex commentaries, but the more these are philosophically non-neutral, the less they are helpful for readers with different basic views from the commentator. As to Sanskrit translation of the definitions found in Spinoza's Part One, learned Sanskritists with knowledge of Western philosophy tend to find a program of adequate translation to be preposterous in its arrogance. The purely conventional 'translation' of *dravya* as 'substance' is useless except as a signal of what word is found in the original text.

Surveys of the history of philosophy, like my own, where ultimate views of philosophers are presented through quotations, or conventional translations, may get undergraduates to acquire a sort of vague understanding of various philosophies. But I tend to think that they may also inoculate them against deeper understanding. Fortunately, the force of the inoculation tends gradually to diminish. The sentence quoted from Davidson, "There can be no doubt..." I am inclined to reject. In at least one sense of translatability, and a very common one, every important attitude relevant in the ecological crisis can be understood and described by the activists in their different languages. This in spite of the complications, when they try to convey the meaning of the sentences they use when formulating their ultimate premisses of philosophical or religious kind. There is no practical, and perhaps no theoretical translatability. Basic structures of their conceptual schemes, if they can be said to 'have' something like that, are not comparable through lack of a neutral total view, which can act as mediator or frame of common reference..19.

One source of my attitudes within the philosophy of language and communication is the work of Bronislaw Malinowski and the 'tribe' of anthropologists who are indebted to him. It implies a tendency to be sceptical about a clear correlation of deepness of difference of language (as a certain kind of systems of rules) and deepness of differences of cultural or total views. This sceptical attitude also influences the view of how the systems of linguistic relates the general or basic conceptual schemes or frameworks. Cultural anthropology and comparative linguistics affirm that there is an intimate relation between vocabulary, cultural value systems, and ontology, but not so much between this and syntax and the more abstract aspects of the language. There may be something 'dynamic' about the Hebrew abstract linguistics, for instance, the position of verbs, which contrasts with the more 'static' character of Greek, and this may for instance correlate with the dynamic character in the Hebrew general ontological view, and the more static character of the Greek. Interesting, yes, but consistent with the opinion that language (still in the sense of a certain kind of set of rules) has only indirect and limited influence upon general or basic conceptual schemes.

Returning to the question to limitations of the comparability of conceptual schemes, I think they show up in every effort, first that of Ernest Cassirer, to describe the relations between Spinoza's and Kant's ethic. Spinoza was scarcely a conceptualist, whereas Kant was. Already that makes certain complications. Perhaps Spinoza cannot be said to have a

conceptual framework, nor an ethic in the sense of Kant. He certainly avoided using the term '*ethica*' in his *Ethics*. Just in the general title and in the set of expressions 'Part x of the *Ethics*' (*Ethicae pars x.*) On the other hand I do not see how one could possibly *prove* limited comparability.

Even within the Indo-European family of languages, there are languages such that the term 'nature' and the expression 'humanity's relation to nature' cannot be translated into them except fairly conventionally. Classic Greek is an example, and its important term *arete*, when conventionally translated into 'virtue' requires commentary. But if we consider languages far outside the Indo-European family, metaphysical and religious texts are a source of wonder. What corresponds to environmental ethics? We may understand - vaguely. I should like to refer to stories and poems translated in Kenneth Katzner's delightful *The Languages of the World*, London: Routledge 1977. Examples: Translation from the Hamito-Semitic language Hausa: "One day it was raining, the hedgehog greeted the squirrel saying, "How do you like the cold?..." The story has a philosophical point I think we readily understand. —From the language Zulu of the Bantu branch of the Niger-Congo family: "Bury me where the grasses grow/ Below the weeping willow trees/ ... Then as I lie there, I shall hear/ The grasses sigh a soft behest:/ "Sleep, beloved one, sleep and and rest." From texts we may infer traits of an environmental ethics, but how can we pretend to be able to compare in a methodologically neutral and adequate way meanings and validity of the ultimate premisses of total views?

The above seemingly pessimistic view of the feasibility of adequate translation and comparison does not rule out marvellous feats of effective intercultural understanding. Consider this case.

A mountaineering expedition has a leadership of Westerners and a number of porters, all Muslims. There is no common language, but the Westerners understand that at a certain fairly late time of the day there is intense discussion among the Muslims concerning when to make food. It is Ramadan, and there should be no eating before sunset. This is all what the Westerners know about the situation. But gradually signals are established, verbal and more often, nonverbal, which make intercultural 'discussion' effective. Main point: "Where is the horizon?" Eating requires the sun to be below the horizon. In extremely rugged country, there is no proper horizon and the view changes often and erratically. Another point, somewhat more difficult to handle by signals: Does the sunset rule apply strictly under every condition, and if not, what is legitimate now? My experience is that considerable differences in ultimate premisses do not *significantly* affect most interpersonal interactions under the most 'ordinary' kinds of problematic situations.

VIII

What would be a suitable general conclusion to this article? Perhaps this simple metaphysical thought: *The richness and diversity of philosophical and religiously ultimate premisses suitable for action in the ecological crisis may be in itself considered part of the richness and diversity of life forms on Earth.*

Notes

1. Max Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness*, Yale University Press, 1991, p. 350ff.
2. Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, Peregrine Smith Books, Salt Lake City, 1985, p. 70.
3. *Environmental Ethics*, Vol.13, No.2, 1991, p. 186.

4. Naess, A., *Self-realization: an Ecological Approach to Being in the World*, Keith Memorial Lecture, Murdoch University, Western Australia, 1986. Reprinted in *The Trumpeter*.
5. Naess, A., "The World of Concrete Contents", *Inquiry*, 28, pp. 417-428.
6. S. Armstrong-Buck, "Whitehead's Metaphysical system as a Foundation for Environmental Ethics", *Environmental Ethics*, 8, 1986, pp. 241-259. References in parenthesis are to that paper.
7. My own interpretation of Spinoza in its relations to the deep ecology movement is suggested in "Spinoza and Ecology", *Philosophia*, 7, 1977, pp. 45-54. A combined interpretation and reconstruction: *Freedom, Emotion and Selfsubsistence: The Structure of a Central Part of Spinoza's Ethics*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1975. 'Self.subsistence' here refers to the dynamic development of the self, the subsistence or perseverance *in se* (in itself) as opposed to *in alio* (in other). There are other interpretations which also are in harmony with main positions within radical environmentalism, such as B. Russell's and G. Sessions'. Main feature: God is *completely* immanent.
8. *Inquiry*, 23, 1980, pp. 213-225. I have discussed her interpretation in detail in my "Environmental Ethics and Spinoza's Ethics: Comments on Genevieve Lloyd's Article", *Inquiry*, 23, 1980, pp. 313-325.9. The conception of 'determined in its essence' is elaborated in "Is Freedom Consistent with Spinoza's Determinism?" *Spinoza on Knowing, Being and Freedom*, ed. J.G. van der Bend, Assen 1974. Are there other plausible or interesting interpretations of the term *determinare*? Of course, and I hope the number will not decrease. A list of close connotations ('equivalences') between terms is obtainable at the Institute of Philosophy, University of Oslo: A. Naess, *Equivalent Terms and Notions in Spinoza's Ethics*.
10. E.C. Hargrove, "The Role of Rules in Ethical Decision Making", *Inquiry*, Vol.28, 1985, p. 36.
11. J. von Uexkull, *Umwelt und Innenwelt der Tiere*, Berlin 1909, and *Theoretische Biologie*, Berlin 1920, English translation, N.Y. 1926.
12. See for example B. Devall & G. Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, pp. 251-253.
13. Gandhi laments deforestation and its possible influence on climate, and advocates a religious foundation of the man/nature relation, defending animal rights. See Shahed Amed Power, *Gandhi and Deep Ecology*, Ph.D. Thesis, Salford University, England, 1990.
14. Eugene C. Hargrove, "Callicott and the Foundations of Environmental Ethics", *Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 11, 1989, No.3, p. 287.
15. Ibid.
16. A.T. Nuyen, "A Heideggerian Existential Ethics for the Human Environment", *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, Vol.25, No.4, 1991, p. 366.
17. Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, Salt Lake City: G.M. Smith, 1985, p. 251.
18. Masson-Oursel, *Comparative Philosophy*, London 1926.

19. In the text of Donald Davidson, the expression 'a language' is of importance. I don't feel I understand well enough what he means by the expression in the contexts he uses it to declare agreement or disagreement, with members of the set of sentences in which he uses the expression. I am puzzled. This admission is made without any feeling of shame, perhaps because it is a prevailing feeling, when I try to compare what at least *prima facie* seems to be deeply different total views. (Probably I should feel a little ashamed because of a belief that if Davidson may be said to 'have' a total view, it will not be deeply different from mine.)

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