

## Arne Naess, His Life and Work Part Two: The Continuing Development of the Long-range, Deep Ecology Movement

### Introduction

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This issue of *The Trumpeter* concludes the four-issue, special series devoted to Arne Naess and his contributions to the long-range, deep ecology movement.

The first issue, 21.1, includes Alan Drengson's comprehensive essay "The Life and Work of Arne Naess: An Appreciative Overview" and a selection of Naess essays on total views, forms of life and open inquiry, and essays on values, systems, and communications research.

The second issue, 21.2, includes essays by Naess on history, education, practical applications, and on local grounds for personal mythologies.

The third issue, 22.1, includes an account of the reception held in Oslo in November, 2005, celebrating the publication of the *Selected Works of Arne Naess (SWAN)*. In this issue, we turned to other authors, teachers, and philosophers who use Naess's approach to life's philosophy to further develop themes in the long-range, deep ecology movement. In this issue Bill Devall writes about "Living in Mixed Communities" and Alan Drengson discusses emotions and life quality. Tim Quick defends and explains Naess's Pluralism, Anthony Weston gives a vision of "Multicentrism," while Ralph Metzner writes of "Transitions to the Ecological Age." The issue ends with two personal sketches of Naess and his work by Margarita Notario and Andrei Whitaker. This third issue also has the first online Naess *Festschrift* as a supplement to the issue.

The *Festschrift* collection is a bare bones selection of Naess's work offering a representative mosaic of his essays and reflections. Its sections include total systems in theory, elements, language, and application. The second section addresses these gestalt features in

relations, places, and practices. We have learned that Naess's empirical studies, and first hand observations in nature, are all interconnected with an ongoing philosophical inquiry that is part of a larger journey, as major thematic elements in his life and work. Readers can get a better sense for this journey if they read his book *Life's Philosophy*. There he characterizes some of the organizing features and their typologies in his own life and work. There is no separation between his life and work. Living in his hut, Tvergastein, or in Oslo, he is always inquiring and living as joyfully as possible. No work or essay is ever completely finished. Even if one has spelled out a life philosophy as systematically as possible, as is shown by Goedel's theorem, no such system can be complete. All systems in our life space are interrelated, changing and responding to each other. The expression of any life philosophy includes language based on narrative contexts that are themselves changing, just as our experience and the world is.

Communication is taking place all the time, everywhere, and living languages are like rivers, changing, suitable for some purposes, always filled with values. Human languages are only a small part of the total communication systems on planet Earth. We can reflect on the possibility of other planets as rich in life and values as our own. Today there are still over 6000 languages and cultures around the world. This diversity is under threat. Given knowledge of a few languages and cultures, we can reflect on the amazing gift of this diversity of cultures and communication systems. Cultures and languages are forms of life that are living systems of participation. They are always adjusting in different ways.

The ecophilosopher, as Naess stresses, likes to appreciate diversity of all kinds, and welcomes discovery of each new species of dialect, culture and language. These are organizing gestalts with unlimited possibilities. When asked: What is possibilism? Naess said, "Anything can happen." Modernism as a philosophy rests on a mechanistic approach to life that is dogged by the spectre of meaningless determinism. That is a scary idea, but we now see that it is only one of countless possibilities we can entertain. We should practice with an open mind, and one guiding principle is that we should try to know what is the case. We also realize that this is, in essence, a way of living from moment to moment as well as a philosophical orientation or approach; that is, we are always learning. Naess shows by his example that great joy is to be found in living with these open possibilities and creative learning.

The fourth, concluding issue of the Naess Series, 22.2 includes essays that reflect the continuing, international development of the long-range, deep ecology movement. These essays explore life's philosophy in the United States, Canada, Portugal, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Australia, and Norway. They continue the discourse on major themes of the movement including topics in ontology, pluralism, possibilism, and respect for diversity and cultural differences.

The first essay, "Holons or Gestalts? A Response to Wilber and Zimmerman" by Tim Quick is a continuation of a discussion involving Stan Rowe, Michael Zimmerman, and Arne Naess. This essay continues Tim Quick's discussion in Volume 22.1, "In Praise of Naess's Pluralism."

Jorge Conesa-Sevilla's paper, "The Intrinsic Value of the Whole: Cognitive and Utilitarian Evaluative Processes as they Pertain to Ecocentric, Deep Ecological, and Ecopsychological 'Valuing'," discusses the larger issues of language and interspecies relations. It returns us to focus on the intrinsic value of each whole, including the whole Earth system with us in it. Naess, Rowe, and others have been discussing these themes through several issues of the *Trumpeter* and elsewhere.

Manuel Couret Branco's essay, "The Interaction of Cultural and Economic Factors: Arguments for a Pluralist Political Economy of Development," discusses economic and policy issues that are found in Naess's *Community, Ecology and Lifestyle* and in some essays included in *SWAN*. Respect for diversity and cultural differences leads us to appreciate cultures and total views and the uniqueness of places and the need for diversity in global relations, economic systems, and development models. Branco presents the case for pluralism in this domain, a topic that Naess had earlier addressed. The importance of the cultural gestalts can't be ignored. It is beautiful that there can be ecosophic cultures and persons living in ideal situations. A major part of our system that controls or limits much of what can be done is said to be the *economy*, as if it were some independent thing that could not be influenced or guided in any way. It is the hand of "destiny." But as Naess realized in *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, the economy is a system and, like every other such system found in culture, open to creative change. Branco supports this view. Cultural systems are always changing and we can influence the nature of this change.

Today, of course, there is a global system that is interrelated with political organizations. It is not a completely neutral system in its

direction. A neutral system cannot be constructed. All systems have values and norms, hypotheses and facts. This list of features is itself a simple nonneutral typology. There are other ways to approach and understand such processes and forces as economics. There are other systems of measure that must be considered if we want sustainable practices. Whether we are designing a forest use system, or a food system for local needs, and so on, all such systems are ways of organizing our practices and habits. Our values play central roles in them, and our judgments and feelings are expressions of values. As Spinoza noticed, we have a choice in emphasizing positive feelings. We can adopt an approach that changes our ability to relate, learn, and understand, so as to live with the deepest feelings and greatest joy. The more we understand, the more we can enjoy. So policies can be ones that promote practices that are sustainable and have high life quality. The solution in each place is found by adapting our practices to the character of our home places. In our personal lives too, we have to be alert to how we can personally improve quality of life where we are. Economic development models are open to choice and should be pluralistic, as Branco observes.

Petr Kopecky, "Nature Writing in American Literature: Inspirations, Interrelations, and Impacts of California Authors on the Deep Ecology Movement" discusses the California experience and development of deep ecology supporters and environmental leaders there. Although Naess is mentioned, but not discussed in this essay, it should be noted that he first lived California in 1938 as a visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley. He experienced the desert for the first time during the year he spent in Berkeley. Naess returned to California several times over the decades from the 1950s to the 1990s. He always made visits to the desert where he found inspiration as he did in the mountains. An attempt to evaluate, for the California setting, some of the general guidelines that Naess advocates for human relationships with other species, was published in an earlier issue of this special series, Volume 22.1, in the article by Bill Devall "Living in Mixed Communities."

The continuing importance of some California writers is recognized by John Seed in his essay "The Ecological Self." Seed is inspired by the poems of Robinson Jeffers. John Seed and Ruth Rosenhek live in Australia. They teach practices and ceremonies for healing ourselves as members of the Earth community in many nations around the world. John Seed and Joanna Macy, a California activist, writer, and teacher, helped to create a ritual Council of All Beings during which human participants take the position of non-human beings and speak for bear

or deer, for example. Rosenhek's essay "Earth, Spirit and Action: The Deep Ecology Movement as Spiritual Engagement" addresses such questions as how do we balance our desire to protect a place with the deeper understanding that, in the long run, a greater shift in consciousness is needed? How do we work from a genuinely peaceful place, when we are filled with grief, anger, and frustration over the callous disregard for billions of years of evolution?

Espen Gamlund, "Arne Naess's Humanistic Ethic," takes the reader into the important domain of personal and individual human lives and urges sensitivity to the needs of one another as persons, not as concepts or abstractions. We should try not to equate the agent with his or her actions, rather we should reject actions that are destructive but not the person. Reject torture but not the torturer. A person is always more than his or her actions. Gamlund's article has been inspired by Arne's talks and actions which impressed him with Naess's humanity and compassion. Arne urges us to not create enemies but to see even those opposed to us as possible friends.

Andrei Whitaker's essay, "Arne Naess on Possibilism," is a continuation from Volume 22.1 of Whitaker's reflections on Naess and his musing about possibilism. As Whitaker found while in Oslo, Naess frequently talks with joy about Einstein's imagination. "Fabulous!" he says. Naess also celebrates the open-ended nature of our daily lives, here in our places that we share. As a possibilist he realizes that each moment is both great and deep in possibilities to be realized. We can make possibilities manifest by our own actions and choices. Since we cannot avoid values, we should choose the best and most deepening ones available. We each have the capacity wherever we are to realize ourselves fully. For Naess, being the best he can in those exchanges now going on is an end in itself. He shows us by example how to create a life that is beautiful. We each can act beautifully. We can help others to realize themselves as, beginning with thoughts and language, feelings and energy, and so on, to actions, we realize ourselves. We are limited mainly by our lack of imagination and by taking ourselves too seriously. Even at 94, Naess is playful and jokes about himself.

The last article in this issue by California philosopher George Sessions is "Wildness, Cyborgs, and Our Ecological Future: Reassessing the Deep Ecology Movement." Sessions reflects on the wide range of philosophical issues that have been discussed and debated in periodical and book literature as these have bearing on the ecological crisis and the deep ecology movement. Many of the papers cited have appeared in *The Trumpeter*. The topics include wildness, wilderness, the creation of

artificial nature, creationism, deconstructionism, the social construction of nature, postmodernism, social ecology, ecofeminism, Western science, political action, and grass roots movements. Sessions' paper refers to Naess's contributions to these discussions over and over again. His paper provides a good overview of some of the main discussions that have taken place over the last 15 to 20 years. He offers his assessment of their relevance to the long-range, deep ecology movement today. It is a fitting conclusion to our special Naess *Trumpeter* series.

While this issue of the *Trumpeter* concludes this special Naess series, plans are underway for future issues that continue to explore some of the topics that Naess explored. We plan a special issue on caring for and appreciating wilderness and the wild in this time of global climate change. These essays will examine the scientific, emotional, and social dimensions of the rapid changes occurring due to global warming and their impact on wild nature. We also propose an issue devoted to Maturity, Wisdom, and Meaning. We invite submission of essays for these special issues from people who are exploring themes relevant to these topics. Those who have articles related to these issues should send them as electronic files to Bill Devall [bdevall@northcoast.com](mailto:bdevall@northcoast.com) and Alan Drengson [ecosophy@islandnet.com](mailto:ecosophy@islandnet.com). Thanks!